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(16047)

FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE

RESPECTING

AFGHANISTAN

PART XXIII

JANUARY TO DECEMBER 1940

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PART XXIII. — JANUARY TO DECEMBER 1940.

[N 82/82/97]

No. 1.

*Lieutenant-Colonel Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received
January 3, 1940.)*

(No. 113.)

My Lord,

Kabul, December 22, 1939.

WITH reference to correspondence ending with the Secretary of State for India's telegram of the 5th December (Forminka No. 172) approving the proposals of the Government of India to send to Kabul two officers from India to discuss with the Afghan Ministers offers of assistance to be given to the Afghan Government in the training of their armed forces, I have the honour to report that Brigadier G. N. Molesworth, Director Military Operations and Intelligence, General Staff, and Major A. S. Lancaster of the 10th Gurkha Rifles, formerly military attaché at this legation, reached Kabul on the 12th December. On the following morning they paid an official call on the Foreign Minister, and in the afternoon opened a series of three talks with the Afghan Ministers. I understand that Brigadier Molesworth is submitting a detailed report of these talks to the Government of India, a copy of which will no doubt be furnished for your Lordship's information, but, as I was myself present at all of them, it may be of use for me to report briefly on their trend.

2. On the first day only the Prime and Foreign Ministers were present and the conversation included a general survey of the situation with regard to the Soviet Union, with particular reference to a possible attack on this country, an outline by Brigadier Molesworth of a plan for assisting the Afghan defence forces, and certain suggestions for improvements in road communications, the air force, and in liaison for intelligence purposes.

3. At the second meeting, at which the War Minister was also present, Brigadier Molesworth presented an aide-mémoire containing proposals for training the army or air force of a foreign Power, and the War Minister, on his side, presented a plan for resisting an invasion from the north, which in Brigadier Molesworth's opinion could hardly be considered a plan at all, and a more detailed scheme for dealing with internal disturbances. He also produced a lengthy list of war material required to supply deficiencies in present equipment and to equip new formations. Brigadier Molesworth then explained in general terms the organisation and distribution of a modern army with reference to the particular tasks of its various branches, and emphasised that the question of equipment must naturally follow a study of the most suitable type of organisation for the requirements of any particular country. He then offered assistance in preparing a war plan and in training the armed forces of Afghanistan in accordance with such a plan. He added that we should be prepared to assist in equipping these forces on suitable financial terms, provided we could ensure that such armament was actually necessary, and would be properly utilised. The conversations proceeded on these lines, with frequent emphasis on both sides for the need for early and concrete action, and the meeting terminated with an agreement by each side to study the proposals put forward in an endeavour to come to some definite conclusion at the next meeting.

4. At the next and last meeting, held on the 16th December, Brigadier Molesworth presented an aide-mémoire, a copy of which is, with his permission, enclosed with this despatch, in which he summarised the conclusions which he had reached as a result of the previous debates, and made certain concrete proposals to implement our offers of assistance. This aide-mémoire was welcomed by the Afghan Ministers as summarising very clearly the general position now arrived at, but, quite unexpectedly, they expressed themselves anxious not to proceed further with details until they had had time to consider our proposals more fully, and in discussion with myself to arrive at some definite conclusions based on the broader political aspects of the situation. The meetings terminated with a warm expression of gratitude to Brigadier Molesworth for the trouble he had taken and for his most lucid explanations of the various points which had arisen.

5. At the moment of writing I find myself at a loss to account for the Afghan attitude at our last meeting. Had these conversations taken place in the normal atmosphere of peace-time negotiations, it would have been quite natural for the Afghan Government to wish to consider at leisure proposals of considerable magnitude which, if put into operation, might well have a far-reaching effect on the whole organisation of their defence services; but when so much emphasis has been laid in recent weeks by the Afghan Ministers on the urgency of the problem and the need for immediate measures of assistance by His Majesty's Government to prepare the Afghan army to assume its rôle of defender of its own borders against Russian aggression, and of an outpost in the defence of India, it was at first somewhat disconcerting to find them unwilling to come to some definite agreement for immediate action.

6. The position will be clearer in the next few weeks; but three possible explanations present themselves. The first is that the Afghan Government are dissatisfied at our inability to give them a guarantee of assistance with armed forces in the event of an invasion of Afghanistan from the north, and are not, in consequence, prepared to risk Soviet hostility by proceeding further with the present scheme for assistance in the development of their own defences. The second is that as a first step they wish to see how far we are prepared to assist them with war material before they commit themselves to accepting our assistance in training their army.

7. The third explanation, which I am inclined to consider the most probable, is that they wished to see in the first place whether we meant business. The Prime Minister and other Afghan Ministers have had many talks with officials of His Majesty's Government and of the Government of India, which have resulted in little more than mutual expressions of goodwill and anxiety on the part of the British officials for the stability and prosperity of this country; "Demonstrations," as the Prime Minister calls them in his peculiar English, and nothing more.

8. Had we on this occasion sent up a junior officer armed merely with some minor proposals for training a few officers in India in technical subjects, they would have thanked him politely and sent him away. But the fact that we sent up a very senior officer from the General Staff, whose exposition of the whole problem was as lucid as his proposals for action were comprehensive and defined, appears to have made a considerable impression on them.

9. Their experience of Great Britain is, rightly or wrongly, that we are nearly always reluctant and late in our offers of assistance, but that when we do mean business, our offers are worth accepting even at the eleventh hour. I am not at all certain, though this at present is little more than a guess, that the effect of Brigadier Molesworth's visit will not be to cause them to seek to revive negotiations for the pact of mutual assistance, which they rejected last September, and endeavour to include in it a comprehensive scheme for the equipping, training and organising of their defence forces.

10. I am sending a copy of this despatch, with enclosure, to the Secretary of State for India and to the Government of India.

I have, &c.

W. K. FRASER-TYTLER

Enclosure in No. 1.

Aide-mémoire in respect of certain questions put to Brigadier Molesworth by His Royal Highness the War Minister on December 14, 1939.

THESE questions refer to—

- (a) Assistance in training the Afghan army.
- (b) Advice regarding strategic plans for the defence of Afghanistan against Soviet aggression.
- (c) Assistance in the provision of arms and equipment to enable the Afghan army to meet the threatened danger.

2. The question of training is of great and urgent importance, but this can be settled in principle without undue difficulty. The questions of advice regarding strategic plans and the provision of arms and equipment are closely related and raise questions of great importance and of major policy affecting His Majesty's Government and Afghanistan.

They have arisen as the result of His Royal Highness the Prime Minister's explanation to Brigadier Molesworth (of which he was not aware before his arrival in Kabul) of his views regarding the position of Afghanistan *vis-à-vis* Russia to-day. Although Brigadier Molesworth is in a position to give advice on strategic plans and organisation for war, His Majesty's Minister is closely concerned on questions of general military policy as affecting the two Governments.

Assistance in Training.

3. Turkish military officers are already assisting the Afghan army in general educational training, and there is no desire whatsoever to interfere with or reduce the assistance they are giving. Now that the Anglo-Franco-Turkish Treaty of Mutual Assistance has been made, it is most desirable that officers of the British army and the Turkish army, who are assisting Afghanistan, should work in the fullest and most cordial co-operation so that Afghanistan may obtain the maximum benefit. The time available may be short. Concrete assistance, with the full co-operation of all concerned, is necessary as soon as possible. This may necessitate early consultation with the Turkish Mission.

Advice on Strategic Plans and Organisation for War.

4. The problem is a very large one, and Brigadier Molesworth could not, without careful and detailed study of the question, give an answer to His Royal Highness the War Minister which would be of any value. He hopes, however, to return in January and, after consideration and consultation in Kabul, to present plans for consideration and discussion before the end of January.

These plans would include the allotment, location and organisation of forces for—

- (a) The internal security of the country.
- (b) The defence of the threatened frontiers.
- (c) The provision of adequate reserves.
- (d) The employment of available forces to meet probable eventualities.

The Provision of Arms and Equipment.

5. This is a matter of major importance, in which His Majesty's Minister is closely concerned, as it is a question of military policy affecting the two Governments.

The extent to which additional arms and equipment will be necessary will depend upon the strategic plan and organisation when accepted by the Afghan Government.

The policy for the provision of arms and equipment, based on the strategic plan, is a matter which will have to be decided and agreed upon between His Majesty's Government and the Afghan Government.

Without, however, prejudicing any conclusions which may be reached on such a question of high policy, it is reasonable to suggest that, should His Majesty's Government decide to assist in this matter, some guarantee would be necessary that :—

- (a) Steps should be taken at once to prepare the army for defence in accordance with the strategic plan accepted by the Afghan Government.
- (b) The Afghan Government should accept such military advice as might be necessary to ensure that the material assistance afforded by the British Government was made use of to the best advantage and benefit of the Afghan army and Afghanistan.

[N 398/82/97]

No. 2.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Mr. Caroe.—(Received in Foreign Office, January 10, 1940.)

(Secret.)

Dear Caroe,

Kabul, November 17, 1939.

I SHALL shortly be discussing with the Afghan Ministers the question of military assistance to be afforded to the Afghan Government by the Government of India, and will broach with them the question of sending up a couple of staff officers from India to go into the question with the General Staff of the Afghan army. From recent talks which I have had with the Prime and Foreign Ministers it seems to me highly probable that the discussions with these officers, if they materialise, will fall into two parts, and it might be of use if I were to describe briefly the present Afghan attitude towards military co-operation with the British Government, so that the officers in question may be prepared for the likely trend of these discussions.

2. As I have pointed out once or twice in the last year or two, the present Afghan Government are professedly anxious for co-operation with the British Government in every sphere. As regards the military sphere, this anxiety derives mainly and naturally from fear of Russia, which has never been absent from their minds, and, while we have been inclined to visualise co-operation as referring to the frontier areas, they have been anxious to draw our attention to their belief that the most serious menace to themselves and to India comes from the north. This menace has loomed very large in the last few months, and occupies most of their attention at present. It is therefore to this aspect of the problem that they will probably draw particular attention during the forthcoming discussions, and on which they will primarily ask for advice.

3. It is, of course, not possible for me to comment in any detail on this question, partly because it is largely one of military strategy, which is outside my purview, and partly because I do not, in fact, know what the present military policy of India is towards a possible attempt at aggression from Russia. But I may perhaps be permitted to offer a few remarks on the question from the point of view of the Afghan Government.

4. They are aware of the fact that their armed forces are totally inadequate to the task of opposing a Russian advance for more than a few days. I have made it quite clear to them in my recent discussions (a) that I agree with this point of view, which is indeed patent; (b) that British co-operation does not mean the sending of armed forces from India to help them in such a case; and (c) that no amount of assistance from us would ever put the Afghan armed forces in a state to defend for any length of time their open northern border from a determined attack by Russia. I think they realise all this, but at the same time they believe that we are extremely unlikely to acquiesce in an occupation by Russia of their territories even so far as the Hindu Kush. They therefore look on themselves as a sort of outpost to India, and their rôle in the case of Russian aggression to do all they can to delay and harass any attack on their territories which would, in their opinion, actually be designed against India, in the expectation that we would assist them, if not with land forces, then, at any rate, from the air and with munitions and other technical assistance.

5. It is with this idea in their heads that they have asked for our assistance in preparing themselves for their rôle, and they will be very disappointed if we

refuse to discuss it with them at all. Nor does it seem, from the layman's point of view, that so long as we make our own position clear there would be any harm in discussing these matters with them and in offering them advice as to the best disposition of their forces to fulfil such a task. It may sound a rather profitless and academic business when viewed from Delhi, but in Kabul the Russians are uncomfortably close, and there seems no doubt that if they were to come the Afghans would fight. If they could only be persuaded to adopt guerrilla warfare and keep their army in the background as much as possible, they might harass the line of communications of such an advance with some effect.

6. From such a discussion one could turn to the second and more immediate objective of assisting the Afghan Government in the actual training of their forces, which would, of course, be of as much use to them from the point of view of controlling their Indian frontiers as from that of defending their northern ones.

7. I am sending copies of this letter to Peel and Collier.

Yours sincerely,

W. K. FRASER-TYTLER.

[N 786/34/97]

No. 3.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received January 19, 1940.)

(No. 109.)

My Lord,

Kabul, December 14, 1939.

WITH reference to your despatch No. 92, dated the 8th September, 1939, I have the honour to report that on the date of King Zahir Shah's birthday I was unfortunately unable, under doctor's orders, to present His Majesty's letter in person. I thought it would be better that the King should receive the letter on his birthday, rather than wait until after the fast of Ramazan, which was just beginning, for me to deliver it in person. I therefore asked the Foreign Minister to deliver it on my behalf and at the same time requested an audience at a later date to enable me to apologise for my inability to appear previously.

2. I received a reply to King George's letter a few days ago, and have the honour to forward this reply in original, together with a translation, as enclosures to this despatch. Shortly after receipt of this letter I was received in audience by King Zahir Shah at the Dilkusha Palace. I found the King in good health and, after the usual preliminaries, he enquired after the health of His Majesty and the Royal family, and renewed his thanks for The King's very generous birthday gift. He had obviously been following the movements of the Royal family very closely since the outbreak of war; he remarked on the wisdom of keeping the two Princesses out of London, and made several enquiries about The King's recent visit to France.

3. He then turned to the war itself, and said that, although he had been obliged to declare neutrality, there was no doubt either in his mind or in those of his subjects as to where their true interests lay. The war had had a remarkable effect on the people of Afghanistan. Whereas they had previously been divided in their opinions and, to some extent, in their policy, he felt that they were now solidly behind him in their determination to maintain their independence and to resist aggression.

4. I said that his information coincided with mine, but I trusted and thought he would have no cause to test the feelings of his subjects. Moscow was far off and Russian Turkestan was discontented and restless. It seemed to my Government and to myself extremely doubtful whether the Soviet Government would risk the hazards of military operations in areas so remote from their centre, particularly when their organisation was from all accounts in a parlous condition.

5. His Majesty replied that he hoped I was correct. Much depended on British support and he was sorry that this support had not been forthcoming in a more concrete fashion some seven years ago, when the Afghan Government had first asked for it. He feared it was now too late to turn the Afghan army into a fighting machine of any value. He could put 70,000 men in the field, but they lacked both munitions and training. The Afghans would fight to the last man

to resist Soviet aggression, but, unless they had the British with them, their means of resistance were wholly inadequate. He understood, however, that two officers of the General Staff in India were shortly to visit Kabul, and he hoped that some concrete plan would be formed as the result of the forthcoming conversations.

6. His Majesty then turned to other aspects of the war, and showed himself well informed as to the present position by land and sea. He talked well with a manner and authority not hitherto noticeable, and ended up the audience with an invitation to me to shoot on his duck preserve, a gesture of friendliness so marked as to suggest to an unkind critic that it was prompted rather by a hopeful sense of favours to come, than by a mere sense of sporting hospitality.

7. I am sending a copy of this despatch to the Secretary of State for India and to the Government of India.

I have, &c.

W. K. FRASER-TYTTLER.

Enclosure in No. 3.

(Translation.)

To His Majesty King George VI, Emperor of the British Empire.

I WAS highly pleased to receive your Majesty's letter dated the 7th September, 1939, and must ask you to accept my most sincere and hearty thanks for your Majesty's kind congratulations on the occasion of my birthday. I also read with pleasure and gratitude the gracious views expressed by your Majesty regarding the strengthening and consolidation of the friendly relations existing between our two Governments. I can assure your Majesty that I reciprocate your sentiments.

As regards the valuable present which your Majesty proposes to send me, I would ask you to accept my sincere thanks in anticipation of your gift and would assure your Majesty that I accept this present with much gratitude as a precious souvenir of your kindness.

Your Majesty's sincere friend.

Kabul, Dilkusha Palace, October 1939.

[N 941/941/97]

No. 4.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received January 23.)

(No. 14.)

(Telegraphic.)

Kabul, January 23, 1940.

ADDRESSED to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; repeated to Foreign, New Delhi. Continuation of Katodon telegram No. 166 of 4th December.

2. Russian failure in Finland has restored confidence. Opinion is now generally held that Russia is not likely to venture on an invasion of India through this country, and would not be successful if she did. Some uneasiness still continues as to possible [? Russian] designs on cotton-growing areas of Northern Afghanistan.

3. Public opinion is, I think, increasingly in favour of democracies, but the younger generation of Afghans have been so much impressed in recent years with the growing power of Germany that it will [? take] some time to remove the impression that [? German] military and air forces are invincible.

4. Among uneducated classes the anti-British attitude engendered by the history of the last hundred years is difficult to [? eradicate], but there is increasing realisation that defeat of the Allies would mean disaster to Afghanistan.

5. Public are beginning to realise that German broadcasts are quite unreliable and are comparing them unfavourably with the British wireless news

[N 1453/62/97]

No. 5.

Government of India, External Affairs Department, to Secretary of State for India.—(Communicated by India Office; Received January 25.)

(No. 220.)

(Telegraphic.)

New Delhi, January 24, 1940.

ADDRESSED to Secretary of State for India; repeated to Kabul, No. 41, and North-West Frontier Province by post.

You will have gathered from weekly reports that there has been deterioration of the situation in Waziristan and on Bannu Dera Jat border. Capture of Duggal, added to general excitement of the tribes by war rumours, called for stringent air action against Shabi Khels and Bhitanni country, with reaction that raiding activities were intensified. There were serious clashes between large raiding gangs and Government forces (both troops and irregulars) and a very daring raid on hospital within Bannu City. Schools and other public buildings have been burnt. Bannu Ahmadzai salient has been increasingly used as harbourage for gangs reinforced by other tribes, including Mahsuds, and constitutes standing threat to Bannu and Kohat districts. Peculiar importance of this area lies in the fact that it is most northerly outpost of Wazir tribes, so that failure to control it may lead to deterioration of the situation further north.

2. Statistics show that casualties among regular troops and civil armed forces during 1939 amounted to seventy-seven killed and 195 wounded, while in the last seven months there have been 1,075 offences committed by tribesmen, including 166 kidnappings and seven air operations.

3. Situation has been considerably eased by the surrender of Duggal without payment of ransom through efforts of Mahsud Maliks of all sections except the Shabi Khel, showing that Mahsud tribe as a whole refuse to follow the Shabi Khel into hostilities against the Government. Bhitannis, moreover, have now surrendered all their captives and air proscription of their country has been called off. But raiding, particularly in the neighbourhood of Bannu and from Ahmadzai salient, continues and districts are out of hand.

4. We think it matter of the utmost importance to stabilise the situation during the remaining months of the cold weather to ensure that disorders do not spread to the north and to apply the necessary force before we are faced with larger commitments.

5. To this end we have still further reviewed the situation in consultation with our military advisers and our Foreign Secretary has discussed with the Governor at Peshawar. It is agreed that the most urgent objective is occupation on a permanent footing of Ahmadzai salient to remove threat to Bannu and insulate Waziristan troubles. Area is surrounded by easy terrain on all sides and can be separated from remainder of Waziristan. Objective would be secured by occupation by troops, construction of roads and posts in the territory and subsequent transfer of control to civil forces, as has been done in Khajuri Plain and Loi Agra. Essence of scheme is that [? occupation] should be permanent, and we are inclined to think public announcement should be made to that effect. It should be possible to accompany occupation with measure of disarmament, but it is not proposed to include area [? in British India]. We can make two brigades available for operation and propose to raise sixteen new platoons of Frontier Constabulary to take over the area [? patrol]. Some strengthening of scouts on Spinwam line will probably be needed in addition. Addition to civil forces will be on a temporary basis as war commitment only.

6. We think that, although salient is in advance of Thal-Mir Ali road, there would be advantage simultaneously with public announcement in informing Afghan Government of our intentions.

7. Further measures will be needed to secure co-ordination in districts between civil and military direction and forces and to deal with ingress of raiding parties of Mahsuds through Bhitanni country in territory further south. We are also considering the need for special powers to restore order in the districts and prevent villagers from rendering aid to tribesmen. The Shabi Khel position, moreover, is not yet clear, and there is a heavy bill for damages against that tribe. These points, however, will be examined at conference which Viceroy proposes to call in Delhi at early date. We ask now for immediate sanction in

principle to occupation Ahmadzai salient. Operations cannot begin for at least fifteen days after sanction is given, and Governor stresses importance of time factor both for the restoration of confidence and to take advantage of remainder of cold weather. Terrain lies low and water is scarce, so that military operations in hot season are impracticable.

[N 1453/62/97]

No. 6.

Telegram from Secretary of State to Government of India, External Affairs Department; repeated to His Majesty's Minister, Kabul, No. 22, dated January 30, 1940.—(Communicated by India Office; Received January 30.)

(No. 475. Secret.)

YOUR telegram of 24th January, No. 220 : Ahmadzai salient.

I presume that you and Cunningham are satisfied that occupation of this area will not involve an undue risk of causing further trouble in Waziristan. If so, I sanction your proposal in principle and subject to consideration of the following points :—

- (a) I am somewhat doubtful whether it would not be preferable to inform the Afghan Government of our intention as soon as possible in advance rather than simultaneously with any public announcement. They are entitled to prior information of any intended "major" operation, and, though this may not come within that category, it would seem more courteous, if we inform them at all, to do so before the last moment. I should be glad of your views on this point. I do not, of course, suggest that they should be consulted, but that Muhammad Hashim should be informed of our intended action with a full explanation of its necessity. This might be the best means of forestalling any adverse reaction on their part, which it seems desirable to avoid in view of the present importance of our relations with them, and the risk of which cannot be altogether excluded. It is true that the area is some distance from the frontier and to the east of the Spinwam Line. But it will be remembered that Muhammad Hashim has not taken too well our occupation in recent years of other areas in Waziristan, though they were also some way from the frontier and within the circular road, and that our alleged "forward" policy, with which permanent occupation of new territory is associated, is something of a bugbear to the Afghan Government.
- (b) Subject to your further views, I am doubtful whether it would be expedient to make a public announcement—at any rate, in such detail as to include a statement that our objective is permanent occupation at this stage. Indeed, with a view to minimising risk of giving material for enemy propaganda, would it not be better to avoid publicity, so far as this may be possible, regarding the operation itself?

[N 1145/62/97]

No. 7.

Viscount Halifax to Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler (Kabul).

(No. 23.)

(Telegraphic.)

Foreign Office, January 30, 1940.

TELEGRAM from Secretary of State for India to Government of India No. 475, dated 30th January : Ahmadzai Salient. Please telegraph your views particularly on point (a).

[N 1466/62/97]

No. 8.

Government of India, External Affairs Department, to Secretary of State for India.—(Communicated by India Office; Received February 3.)

(No. 333.)

(Telegraphic.)

New Delhi, February 3, 1940.

ADDRESSED to Secretary of State for India; repeated to Kabul, No. 52, and copy to North-West Frontier Province.

Your telegram No. 475, dated 30th January.

2. Points (a) and (b) were discussed in conference to-day.

3. *Point (a).*—We agree that Afghan Prime Minister should be informed immediately that Government of India are about to undertake operation in Ahmadzai territory under control of Deputy Commissioner, Bannu. We think it should be explained to Afghan Government that territory in question is small area situated between Kohat and Bannu districts and to the east of Thal-Spinwam-Mir Ali line, which is already in occupation and which is a main line communication. Necessity for operation can be explained by reference to campaign of intolerable raiding and kidnapping which has been undertaken by tribesmen from a harbourage in this area during the past eighteen months, starting with serious raid on Bannu city in July 1938, and ending with raid on Bannu hospital and serious attack on Serai Naurang a week ago. Further object is, of course, the protection of the towns, villages and roads within settled districts.

4. We do not propose that operation should be described to Afghan Prime Minister in terms of permanent occupation. Indeed, whilst we agree that operations now to be undertaken must find effective and lasting solution of raiding difficulties in Bannu area, we wish to postpone our own final decision as to actual measures to be applied and degree of permanent occupation necessary, *e.g.*, by irregular forces, tribal militia or otherwise, to secure end in view. We intend to construct roads and posts, but think it unnecessary to go into these details with Afghans. We hope that Afghan Government will be ready to exert influence on Ipi, who is still potent factor in the situation.

5. *Point (b).*—State of affairs on Waziristan border has received considerable publicity here, and fact that measures are under consideration is known to the press and the public. Active preparations for operations entail move of troops starting on the 3rd February, and we feel that we cannot postpone any longer some announcement as to our intentions. Hindu opinion is considerably agitated by events of last few months and it is not possible to avoid publicity.

6. We propose that public announcement should be much in the form made to the Afghan Government. It will be stated that the Government of India, after consulting the Governor of North-West Frontier Province, have decided that, in order to bring raiding and kidnapping to an end, and for the protection of towns, villages and main lines of communication [? within] districts, it is necessary to send troops into tribal territory under the control of the Deputy Commissioner, Bannu. The objective is to clear out the hostile gangs and to enable the population to resume their ordinary avocations without interference from across the border. At the same time it would be stated that civil forces are being increased in order to afford close protection to the population of the districts.

7. We think that communication to Afghan Government should be made before they receive information of any announcement to the press in India. We are anxious to make announcement to the press as soon as possible, and request therefore very early sanction to terms of announcement, both to Afghan Government and in India.

[N 1369/62/97]

No. 9.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received February 3.)

(No. 22.)

(Telegraphic.)

Kabul, February 3, 1940.

AHMADZAI salient.

2. Prime Minister's energies are largely occupied at present with maintaining peace of the frontier. He is very much afraid of effect on public opinion at present juncture of frontier disturbances, and particularly apprehensive of handle these would give German and Russian propagandists, who will exploit situation to the full.

3. I should, therefore, advise strongly against any operation at present liable to disturb peace of the border were it not for the fact that—

(a) State of Bannu district appears to make drastic action imperative.

(b) Salient is some distance from the border.

(c) Fact that we have a road behind it will make it appear to be operation of minor importance and not in true sense part of forward policy.

4. I should [? like to] inform Prime Minister of operation a few days in advance of its initiation. I agree with your view that minimum possible publicity should be given to affair and should like to be able to tell Hashim this.

(Repeated to Foreign, New Delhi, and Forminka, No 23 of 30th January.)

[N 1369/62/97]

No. 10.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received February 4.)

(No. 23. Secret.)

(Telegraphic.)

Kabul, February 4, 1940.

AFGHAN-SOVIET relations.

2. At interview on 20th January Prime Minister asked me to obtain for him clear definition of His Majesty's Government's attitude and actions in the event of Russian attack on Afghanistan.

3. I said my Government did not look on the prospect of such attack as at all probable. In any case, I thought our attitude was already known to His Royal Highness. As to our actions, he had learnt from Brigadier Molesworth how difficult it was to define in advance what these would be. I did not, however, continue the discussion, but said I would refer the question.

4. You will realise that the general opinion here, both among Afghans and foreigners, is that, in the event of such an attack, we should certainly go to assistance of Afghanistan. This impression has been conveyed to me in conversation with both my Italian and French colleagues, and also by [? Turkish] Ambassador. There is no doubt that the opinion is widely held that we have special interests here which would cause us to intervene actively in support of Afghan integrity.

5. Effect of our failure to do so would be disastrous here, and, although I am not in position to judge effect elsewhere, it seems possible that it might seriously prejudice our position with Mahometans in Middle and Near East, and also possibly in India.

(Repeated to Foreign, New Delhi.)

[N 1397/82/97]

No. 11.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received February 4.)

(No. 24.)

(Telegraphic.)

Kabul, February 4, 1940.

MY despatch No. 113 of 22nd December: Military assistance.

2. At interview on 30th January, Prime Minister discussed this question. He said that Afghan Government were in full agreement with the general scheme of training propounded by Brigadier Molesworth, who had, on his side, received

from War Minister list of requirements for Afghan army. He would like to know whether the list had been considered, and whether the British Government were prepared to assist with the supply of munitions of war.

3. I said that I had received no instructions on this subject, since my Government was waiting to hear whether the Afghan Government accepted their general proposals. Speaking personally, I thought to discuss supply of munitions before the question of training was putting the cart before the horse. In a matter of this sort we were not merchants like Germany or Italy, but were genuinely anxious to assist in improving the state of the Afghan army. At the same time we did not see that the supply of armaments on large scale to forces quite unfit to use them would serve any useful purpose.

4. Prime Minister said he fully agreed. He would like to put training scheme in force at once, but there were difficulties in the way. It would take time to accustom army and people to the idea of British assistance in army training. Tribes, for instance, would not view such co-operation favourably if they believed it was intended to be used against them (*cf.* my despatch No. 3 of 10th January).

5. He felt, however, that at any rate in informed circles many of these difficulties could be removed if he were in position to inform his Cabinet and military leaders that British Government would assist by granting credits for purchase of armaments. This would demonstrate sincerity of British intentions and pave way for introduction of training scheme.

6. I had not lost sight of paragraph 4 of Forminka No. 96 of 14th September, 1939, but in view of the great discrepancy between amount available and amount now asked for, thought it better not to mention any sum until the general question as it now presents itself has been further considered.

7. Prime Minister's proposal is that the British Government should state whether they are prepared to grant credits for particular munitions, and, if so, up to what amount. It would then be possible to consider a scheme for military assistance as a whole and arrive at agreement covering both training and supply of munitions.

8. I hope to discuss the question further at Delhi. In this, as in other matters, Afghan Government appear to have been influenced by assistance granted by His Majesty's Government to Turkey.

(Repeated to Foreign, New Delhi.)

[N 1482/26/97]

No. 12.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received February 6, 1940.)

(No. 111.)

My Lord,

Kabul, December 16, 1939.

IN my telegram No. 92 of the 9th September I mentioned that a serious breach had occurred between members of the ruling family, as a consequence of which Sirdar Shah Mahmud, the King's uncle and Minister of National Defence, had gone off to the north ostensibly on a fishing expedition. I took advantage at the first opportunity of a long standing friendship with the Prime Minister to speak to him on this rather delicate subject. I pointed out that the stability of this country depended very largely on the remarkable solidarity of the Royal House, which had shown no signs of weakening since King Nadir Shah ascended the throne in 1929. It would be disastrous, if at the present critical juncture private differences among members of the Royal Family should weaken the Government and give an opportunity to its opponents to make capital out of their quarrels. I begged His Royal Highness to recall his brother from the north and see whether their dispute could not be resolved without further publicity. He admitted in reply that there had been differences of opinion, but made light of them and said that Sirdar Shah Mahmud was returning to Kabul. He did so shortly afterwards, and for a few weeks normal relations seemed to have been re-established.

2. In the last week one or two fresh reports have been current that the breach had not in fact been healed and that further difficulties have arisen over the conduct of military affairs. If these continue the effect may be serious; and I think it advisable to inform your Lordship of the present position so far as I know it.

3. Sirdar Shah Mahmud became War Minister in 1929, shortly after King Shah's arrival in Kabul. He undertook the task of rebuilding the army at a very difficult time, and in 1931 himself led an expedition to the north to settle with the Basmachi leader, Ibrahim Beg. In the ten years during which he has been in charge of military affairs he has raised and equipped from very scanty resources an army of about 70,000 men, which, though it can hardly yet be reckoned as a fighting force of any value by modern standards, is a considerable advance on any regular military force hitherto possessed by Afghanistan. In addition, he has done much to improve and encourage physical training and sports among the youth of the country, and has directed with zeal, though not always with wisdom, the Afghan Department of Tribal Affairs. His influence among the tribes, particularly in the Southern Province, is considerable.

4. Unfortunately, he contracted a goitre in 1929, which affected his general condition. He underwent an operation in Berlin in 1936, which removed the goitre, but did not seem fully to restore his health. He became stout and lazy, rarely attended his office and allowed the army to look after itself.

5. Meanwhile there has been growing up in Afghanistan a young Afghan party, to which I have made reference in previous reports. This party represents the post-war (the Third Afghan War) generation of Afghanistan and consists of young men who have had a European or at any rate advanced education, and who are inclined to be impatient at the slow progress and cautious policy of the older generation. Chief among this party are the King's cousins, sons of his uncle Sirdar Muhammad Aziz Khan, who was murdered in Berlin in 1933. Of these one is Sirdar Naim Jan, Minister of Education, and the other Sirdar Daud Khan, till lately Governor of the Eastern Province.

6. Sirdar Daud Khan is a soldier and an able, intelligent and tactless young man. He has been in Kabul for some time this year, after relinquishing the Governorship of the Eastern Province; and apparently at his instigation and with the support of his uncle the Prime Minister, the King was persuaded in August to issue two orders. The first of these placed the air force under His Majesty's direct command: the second appointed Sirdar Daud Khan as Independent Commander of the Kabul Garrison, and gave him control of the educational establishments in the capital formed for the training of potential officers of the army. By these two orders the prospects of efficiency in the Kabul military and air forces were greatly increased, but the War Minister was deprived of a considerable part of his power. Shah Mahmud, though very pleasant and capable, is an unintelligent and pig-headed man, and demonstrated his resentment at this loss of power by leaving Kabul at the end of August. The position was critical, the Afridi incursion was in progress, and no one quite knew what effect the war would have on the internal stability of the country. Daud Khan was sent off to deal with the Afridis and Shah Mahmud was asked to return. It seems that on his return the King, to pacify him, rescinded his two orders, and that Shah Mahmud had won the first round. The second round began with Daud Khan's return to Kabul some weeks ago. His influence has again been uppermost; and it appears, though this at present is not quite certain, that the King's original orders are once more in force. Whatever may be the actual position, reports are current that relations are very strained between Shah Mahmud and his nephew.

7. The whole affair is most unfortunate and may have serious consequences. It represents the growing struggle between the older and younger generation in Afghanistan, a struggle which sooner or later was bound to come to a head but which might with advantage have been postponed to a more favourable time. I am inclined to discredit the reports that the younger party, which includes Abdul Majid, the Minister of Commerce, have an anti-British bias; but there is no doubt that German influence in this country will exert itself in favour of any movement tending to the disruption of the present Government and régime.

8. I am sending a copy of this despatch to the Secretary of State for India and to the Government of India.

I have, &c.

W. K. FRASER-TYTLER.

[N 1369/62/97]

No. 13.

Viscount Halifax to Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler (Kabul).

(No. 26. Secret.)

(Telegraphic.)

Foreign Office, February 6, 1940.

GOVERNMENT of India's telegram No. 333/52 and your telegram No. 22 of 3rd February: Ahmadzai Salient.

You should now at once approach Afghan Prime Minister on lines suggested by Government of India and inform latter of action taken.

[N 1536/62/97]

No. 14.

Telegram from Secretary of State to Government of India, External Affairs Department; repeated to Kabul, No. 27, dated February 6, 1940.—(Communicated by India Office; Received February 7.)

(No. 605. Secret.)

ADDRESSED by Secretary of State to Government of India, External Affairs Department; repeated to Kabul, No. 27.

Your telegrams No. 318 of 1st February and No. 333 of 3rd February: Ahmadzai Salient. I approve your proposals and terms of your proposed press announcement. I appreciate difficulty of avoiding some publicity, but hope that it will be restricted as much as possible. Communication to Afghan Prime Minister should be made first and followed by press announcement in India after such interval as you find practicable.

2. I feel sure that you will appreciate anxiety of His Majesty's Government lest operation should lead to locking up of any appreciable number of troops and air force units in present circumstances, and that you will bear this aspect of the matter constantly in mind.

[N 1536/62/97]

No. 15.

Government of India, External Affairs Department, to Secretary of State for India.—(Communicated by India Office; Received February 7.)

(No. 373.)

(Telegraphic.)

New Delhi, February 6, 1940.

ADDRESSED to Secretary of State for India, repeated to Kabul, No. 59. Katodon, No. 22, 3rd February: Ahmadzai Salient. My immediately succeeding telegram contains text of communiqué which we are anxious to issue here as soon as possible.

2. If you approve it is suggested that His Majesty's Minister should now inform Prime Minister of proposed operations on the lines proposed in our telegram No. 333 of 2nd February, laying special emphasis on points (a) (b) and (c) in paragraph 3 of his telegram under reference. He might also inform Prime Minister of terms of the draft communiqué as proof of limited extent of the publicity which is being given to our proposals.

3. In view of terms in which communiqué is drawn up we ask for your agreement to issue here at once. But we think that Afghan Prime Minister should be informed as nearly simultaneously as may be possible.

[N 1536/32/97]

No. 16.

Government of India, External Affairs Department, to the Secretary of State for India.—(Communicated by India Office; Received February 7.)

(No. 374.)

(Telegraphic.)

New Delhi, February 6, 1940.

ADDRESSED to Secretary of State for India, repeated to Kabul. Draft press communiqué. In order to strengthen the defence of Bannu and Kohat districts and afford protection to the towns, villages and communications in those

districts, Government are proposing to employ additional regular troops on their border and also to increase strength of civil armed forces. The object is to control hostile gangs and to enable the population to resume their ordinary avocations without interference by tribes. To this end, Government are also considering the construction of temporary posts in difficult tangle of hill country occupied by the Bannu Wazirs which runs along the border of northern part of Bannu and southern part of Kohat districts and has for a long time been used as a base by gangs raiding in those districts.

[N 1646/62/97]

No. 17.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received February 9.)

(No. 26.)

(Telegraphic.)

Kabul, February 9, 1940.

ON receipt of your telegram of 6th February I asked for immediate interview with the Foreign Minister. This was granted for Thursday afternoon and before receipt of the Government of India's telegrams Nos. 59 and 62. I did not think it advisable to await further instructions, more particularly as Foreign Minister had raised the subject himself, and therefore handed him letter informing him of intentions of the Government of India as instructed and explained matters to him with the aid of a map.

He will inform the Prime Minister and will request him to restrain [? omission] if possible. I considered that request for interview with Prime Minister would have given an undesirable importance to my communication (Repeated to Foreign, New Delhi, Ahmadzai Salient.)

[N 1611/34/97]

No. 18.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received February 9.)

(No. 3. Confidential.)

My Lord,

Kabul, January 10, 1940

THE proposals for an Anglo-Afghan Agreement of Mutual Assistance and Co-operation have for the present come to nothing, and it is doubtful whether they will be revived by the Afghan Government so long as the course of the war may cause strained relations or hostilities between His Majesty's Government and the Soviet Government to result in any form of encroachment by the Soviet Government on Afghan territory. At the same time the proposals put forward by His Majesty's Government for such a pact made a profound impression on the Afghan Government, and, in paragraph 7 of my telegram of the 20th October (Katodon 129), I mentioned that the Prime Minister considered that although no pact had been signed he felt bound to fulfil to the best of his ability the proposals contained therein. In view of this statement, and of the possibility that sooner or later proposals for the conclusion of such a pact may be revived, it might be of interest to examine the proposals at leisure, and particularly the only one on which any large measure of controversy may be expected.

2. Of the clauses mentioned in paragraph 1 of your Lordship's telegram of the 14th September (Forminka 96), (a) and (b) are non-controversial, (c) is largely a question of military strategy and policy which, though it may give rise at a later date to controversial questions, is not yet sufficiently clear to call for comments. Clause (d) is, however, likely to give rise to a number of problems, and it would, I think, be as well as to attempt to clarify what exactly we mean by co-operation on the frontier, and what we can expect from the Afghan Government as a result of a formal agreement to develop such co-operation.

3. The discussions on this question had not progressed far enough to enable the Government of India to define precisely what meaning they attached to co-operation, but paragraph 3 of their telegram, dated the 1st September, 1939, gives the broad lines of their attitude to this question, to which might perhaps

be added the view expressed by his Excellency the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province in his telegram of the 9th September, 1939. Generally speaking, therefore, our view of co-operation would appear to be:—

- (a) Exchange of information.
- (b) Measures to prevent our tribes interfering in Afghanistan and *vice versa*.
- (c) Control of refugees or other elements using tribal territory on either side of the frontier for activities subversive to either or both contracting parties, and, if necessary, their removal from the vicinity of the frontier.
- (d) A clause designed to prohibit direct interference by either party in the other's territory, though this would not preclude, for the present at any rate, payment of certain allowances by the Afghan Government to British tribesmen.

4. Now it is apparent that these clauses merely represent the policy which we have been endeavouring to follow ourselves, and have been attempting to instil into the Afghan Government during the past few years. If they could be carried out in practice and in all circumstances the frontier problem would quickly be solved, and we should very soon have an international boundary as rigidly adhered to as, say, the boundary of France and Spain, with a line of demarcation which had the same meaning for the inhabitants of the Anglo-Afghan frontier areas as it has for those of the Franco-Spanish borderland.

5. But experience extending over many years has shown that the Durand Line has few of the attributes of an international, or rather national, boundary. Throughout its length it cuts a nation in two, and, worse still, in several places it divides actual tribes. It is an arbitrary line, representing at best nothing more than the intentions of those who made it some fifty years ago, intentions which their successors have ever since, on the one side, been trying to carry out and, on the other, striving to defeat. We have so far progressed in the last few years that we have induced the present Afghan Government to acknowledge the existence and meaning of the Durand Line, but we do not seem yet to have made much, if, indeed, any, progress in persuading the frontier tribes to do the same. So little progress, in fact, have we made that if we except clause (a) every one of the clauses which we are now proposing to incorporate in a formal and binding agreement have been violated by one side or the other in the past half-dozen years, and agreement or no agreement there is no reason to suppose that they will not be violated again.

6. I cannot, therefore, help feeling doubtful whether it would be wise to commit ourselves formally to carry out these measures until such a time as we are ourselves certain that we can control the tribes to the extent required. We are at this moment endeavouring to impress on the world the importance of the sanctity of treaties and formal engagements, and a failure on our part to implement undertakings of the nature proposed would not create a favourable impression generally, or, in particular, afford a good example to the Afghan Government.

7. I am also doubtful whether the Afghan Government would agree to sign such a pact. The Prime Minister and his Government are nothing if not realists, they deal with facts as they find them, and are most unwilling to commit themselves to formal engagements unless they believe that they can implement them. In the present case the three main clauses mentioned in paragraph 3 above are, so far at any rate as the Afghans are concerned, merely the expression of a pious hope, an ideal towards which they may strive but to which they have little expectation of attaining for many years to come.

8. In making this statement I realise that I am laying the Afghans open to the charge which is frequently brought against them by their critics that it is not so much the ability to co-operate on the frontier that is lacking as the will, and that the Afghan leopard has not, in fact, changed his spots since the days of Abdur Rahman and Habibullah. It is only the technique that is now different and more subtle. This charge is still frequently made and it is plausible enough, but I do not think it is true. There is sufficient evidence before us nowadays to show that Governments can and do change their policy to meet the varying requirements of their situation. This is particularly likely to happen in the case of countries in an early stage of development, where progress is marked and

changes consequently are rapid. The change which has taken place during the last twenty years in the mental outlook, particularly among the ruling classes, of the people of this country is very remarkable indeed, and it would be a cause for surprise rather than the reverse if their attitude towards the tribes, who remain a perpetual menace to their stability and very existence, had not also undergone a change.

9. It must, however, be admitted in parenthesis that there remains in the minds of the Afghan rulers one reservation. They have frequently reminded us that their treaties are with the British and not with the Indians; their policy is governed by this factor, and so long as British sovereignty remains in visible form in India they will be faithful to their undertakings to us and will strive for peace and good relations with India. But should it ever happen that the British relax their hold on India either to the extent of granting independence or the right to independence to that country, or even to such an extent that they could no longer guarantee to protect the Moslem minority against the Hindus, then Afghan policy would assuredly change and Afghanistan would openly support their Mahometan co-religionists in the struggle for domination which would inevitably ensue. The clock would, in fact, be put back 200 years, and so long as there is any possibility of such an outcome to the present political development of India, the Afghans will retain in the back of their minds a feeling, composed partly of irredentism and partly of religious sympathy, which might well cause them to hesitate before co-operating whole-heartedly with us in the subjugation of the frontier tribes.

10. This feeling is, I believe, present in the minds of many Afghans, but not I think to the extent of influencing their present policy. For as I have said the Afghan rulers are above all things realists. They are aware of the oscillations of the balance of power in Central Asia throughout the course of the 19th century, until the needle finally came to rest with the signing of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. This convention has long since ceased to have effect, but the balance has remained steady and the Afghans refuse to believe that Great Britain will ever be so unwise as to entrust its maintenance to a purely Indian Government, which in their opinion could not possibly carry out this task.

11. They are, therefore, ready to co-operate with us in our efforts to control the frontier tribes, realising as they do that the shadow of the tribal menace lies heavy over Kabul and their main trade routes, and that until it is removed progress and development are sorely hampered. But they view co-operation in a different light from us, and it would be as well to place on record what these views are, since such an explanation may serve to elucidate some of the apparent inconsistencies in the Afghan attitude and in their methods of dealing with tribal affairs. In propounding them I am aware that I am stating a heresy which is anathema to probably every expert on frontier affairs on the Indian side of the border, and I have no desire to associate myself with the views so frequently expressed to me by Afghan Ministers. I realise and have often told them that their solution to the frontier problem can hardly be acceptable to the Government of India. At the same time they are the views of practical and, I believe, honest men who have had a far more extensive and intimate connexion with the tribal problem than even the most experienced of our frontier officers, and who for obvious reasons view its solution with greater earnestness than even we do. As such their views are at least worth recording.

12. The Afghan Government are aware that for the last sixty years or so we have been struggling with the question of how to control the frontier tribes. We have spent thousands of lives and millions of money in these efforts, and in some places we have made progress. But this progress has not been commensurate with the expenditure involved and we are still faced with the three great problems of how to bring into control Mohmand country, Tirah and Waziristan. Meanwhile, there is growing in this country a political structure and an economic organisation, both sensitive and vulnerable, whose development is hampered by the tribal menace, while at the same time their existence is threatened by our efforts to control it. The Afghans, therefore, while fully in agreement with our objects view our methods with undisguised concern. Their attitude may be summarised as follows:—

13. They accept the Durand Line as the international boundary with all that this implies, but insist that for reasons at present beyond control of either side it is impossible for them or for us to implement the undertakings normally

imposed by international law in the case of such boundaries. They admit that we should strive to attain this ideal, but believe that it will never be achieved by unilateral military force. It will be achieved in time by true "peaceful penetration," but the keynote of such penetration must be its peaceful nature. The use of force breeds force to resist it and retards progress.

14. So long as the use of force remains, if not in the foreground of our frontier policy, at any rate as an integral part of it, the Afghan Government will find it very difficult to co-operate with us overtly and whole-heartedly in seeking a solution of this problem. They note that however peaceful and well intentioned the Government of India's policy may be the effect of it in the last ten years has been to produce tension throughout the tribal areas of the North-West Frontier Province leading to two military operations in Mohmand country, a period of extreme crisis in Tirah and a long-drawn-out and wearisome struggle in Waziristan. They realise that they have no right of interference in our policy, but they cannot co-operate with it, if such co-operation is to mean that they are to lend countenance and support to a continuance of this same state of affairs. They can only join hands with us if they can justify such action to their own people and at the same time cause the tribes to realise that such co-operation is intended to bring benefit to them and improve their way of life.

15. They, therefore, urge that we should for the present regard the tribal problem as a whole, in which each Government is equally interested, and in which each side is striving for the same ends. We should pool our assets and enter on a phase of true co-operation designed to secure peace on both sides of the border and thereby to give an opportunity for progress in the pacification and control of the whole area. Our assets, as they see them, are on the British side an overwhelming force, which should be kept well in the background and never used except as the last resort, and our control of the tribes exerted by means of tribal allowances and civil administration. On their side force is lacking, but control is exercised to some degree by allowances and to a greater degree by the fact that the tribes are dealing with an Islamic Government and with men who really understand them. This is their main asset and is one which the Afghan Government believe could be used to much advantage in the common cause. It has been used in the past quite irregularly but effectually in controlling such men as Badshah Gul, and might well have been used in 1937 to liquidate the Faqir of Ipi, had its use been permitted at a time when the Faqir was still obscure. The essence of it is swift application and a disregard for international boundaries. Its effect would be to deal with trouble before it had time to spread, and if not to nip it in the bud, at any rate to localise it. And its object would be pacification and control of the tribal areas leading to gradual disarmament, peaceful conditions and civilisation. Only when this object was well on the way to attainment would the time come to talk of the Durand Line and international obligations.

16. But though the maintenance of peace is the primary, it is not the sole object of such a policy. With it should go the spread of education, the development of international highways and freedom of intercourse between both Governments and the tribes on either side of the frontier. Without such intercourse the Afghan Government feel that the peaceful and beneficent intentions of the two Governments can never be brought home to the dwellers in the remoter areas of the frontier.

17. It is unnecessary for me to comment on this policy. It cuts straight across the Government of India's most cherished principle of non-interference, and it would be preferable to leave it to that Government to comment on it should they so desire. But, though it may not justify, it does to some extent explain, such irregularities as the payment of allowances to our tribesmen and periodic interference, in times of stress, across our borders. The policy is one of peace at almost any price, for two main reasons, the instinct of self-preservation and the belief that without peace pacification is impossible. It is not always effective, as, for instance, in Katawaz recently, but on the whole it is successful. In the last ten years there has been only one major rising on the Afghan side of the border, and it was localised in a comparatively small area.

18. It would appear, therefore, if I have correctly estimated the attitude of the two Governments towards this problem, that there is a divergence of views which will make true co-operation in its solution a matter of some difficulty. It may be that I have over-estimated the difficulty, and that if the time should come

for a more precise definition of our mutual obligations, the Afghan Government will be prepared to sign a convention on the lines indicated by the Government of India, treating it as an ideal which may some day be capable of attainment. But it would, I think, be as well that we should be prepared for a representation of the opposite views as indicating in Afghan opinion a more practical method of dealing with the realities of the situation.

19. I am sending a copy of this despatch to the Secretary of State for India and to the Government of India.

I have, &c.

W. K. FRASER-TYTLER.

[N 1612/26/97]

No. 19.

Unofficial Quarterly Letter from His Majesty's Minister, Kabul.—(Received February 9.)

(Confidential.)

Kabul, January 1, 1940.

THIS letter begins with a brief survey of the effect up to date on Afghanistan of the war in Europe, and goes on to say something of the frontier problem as viewed through Afghan eyes.

The war is having two effects on neutral countries, political and economic. To deal with the latter first, Afghanistan found herself in September deeply involved, as I showed in my last letter, in the economic policy of Germany. The debt actually owing to Germany was not so great at the outbreak of war as I had believed, but it was, and is, considerable for so poor a country. It might, however, have been met by the declaration of a moratorium, had not this meant the breakdown of the whole plan of industrial development and expansion of armaments in Afghanistan. In 1936-37 the Afghan Government entered into an agreement with Germany whereby she obtained credits over a term of seven years for the purchase of arms and machinery, these credits to be met by export of raw material, such as cotton, wool, opium, &c., for which the Germans were prepared to pay high prices, and by payments in cash. In September 1939 the credits were half exhausted, and the machinery, &c., partially delivered. Afghanistan, therefore, found herself with a debt which she could not discharge by the ordinary trade routes, and with a number of half-finished and still wholly useless factories, hydro-electric works and so on. The position is admittedly difficult, and at the time of writing a solution of the problem is still being sought.

From the general economic standpoint Afghanistan is at present gaining from the war. It was believed by many people in this country, including myself, that war would bring disaster to Afghan trade and finances. Prices of imports were bound to rise, and it seemed certain that the main Afghan export of Persian lambskin ("karakul"), being a luxury, would find no market. Prices have undoubtedly risen, though not so far to any great extent, but contrary to all expectations the Persian lamb trade is booming. The London fur market has been surprisingly steady, but the main factor in the situation has been the extraordinary prices fetched in America for direct sale. An average of 43s. a skin as against 35s. a few months ago is being offered in New York. The boom may be short, but, while it continues, Afghan merchants are doing well and the Government are acquiring some much-needed foreign exchange. Cotton prices, too, have risen, and, although the Afghan Government cannot hope to get the fantastic prices offered by Germany before the war, their cotton output is increasing and they should not do too badly if they sell in the open market.

On the political side the main factor, as stated at the end of my last letter, is speculation as to the future intentions of Russia. The scare occasioned by the invasion of Poland died down in October only to be revived by the attack on Finland. The magnificent defence put up by the Finns has to some extent revived courage, but the Afghans are painfully aware of their long undefended northern border and the inadequacy of their defences. Endeavours have been made to give them heart by laying emphasis on the improbability of the Russians attempting to invade India, and the unlikelihood of their success if they did, but the Afghans have not so far been able to rid themselves of the feeling that in the defence schemes of India they may at any moment be called upon to play the part of Uriah the Hittite.

More probable and equally unwelcome is the prospect that they may be faced with demands of a far-reaching nature by the Soviet Government for political and economic concessions in their northern provinces. Such demands, if complied with, would, in the Prime Minister's opinion, lead sooner or later to the sovietisation of these provinces, and he is determined to resist them. Such resistance might lead to the seizure by Russia of all the country between the Oxus and the Hindu Kush, an action which would in all probability involve the break-up of the Afghan Kingdom. It is one of the misfortunes of this country that their fighting strength should lie in the south and east, where it is a standing nuisance, while their prosperity in cotton, karakul and coal lies in the north, where it is a perpetual source of temptation to their neighbours across the Oxus.

Inside the country regulations are being enforced prohibiting the movements of foreigners resident in Afghanistan, except members of the Diplomatic Corps, unless on duty. This regulation applies to all foreigners, but is chiefly directed against Germans, of whom there are still more in Afghanistan than of any other nationality. They are being fairly well looked after, but German and Russian propaganda continues with marked virulence, though on the whole with little effect. The general attitude of the people is strongly on our side, and at a recent audience the King remarked on the unifying effect which the present situation has had on the people of the country, who were now solidly behind their rulers in their determination to maintain their independence.

This desire to show a united front explains the extreme anxiety at present manifested by the Afghan Government at the news of any trouble on or across the frontier which may have repercussions in Afghanistan. In the last few weeks representations have been received about the reported activities of an obscure chieftain in Baluchistan, which in normal times would have passed unnoticed in Kabul, and about some tribal fighting in Bajaur which appears to have been of little importance, but to have involved some Afghan Mohmands of Kunar. More important than either of these was the attempt by a certain Ghulam Ahmed to raise a lashkar in Tirah this autumn for the purpose of invading the Eastern Province of Afghanistan in the cause of ex-King Amanullah. The story of this attempt is interesting, and as it is a typical example not only of Afghan inefficiency, but also of their attitude to the frontier problem, it is worth recording briefly.

Ghulam Ahmed is the son of a certain Ali Ahmed Jan, a prominent figure in the time of Amanullah, whom he accompanied on his European tour in 1928 when he distinguished himself by being certainly the first and possibly the last Afghan to venture on a vulgar story at a Guildhall banquet. Ali Ahmed was crowned King of Afghanistan in Jalalabad during the revolution, but lasted only a few weeks, his downfall being due partly to his reverses in the field and partly to the discovery by his tectotal adherents of a number of bottles of gin in his bedding. He was done to death by the Bacha-i-Saqao a few weeks later.

The son, Ghulam Ahmed, was an unsatisfactory youth, whom I knew slightly in 1932. He inherited his father's weakness for drink, and though closely connected with the present ruling family, through his mother, appears to have been subverted by evil company, and possibly by Italian influence, into plotting against his sovereign. His activities were sufficiently well known for me to warn the Prime Minister against him, but in spite of this warning he managed at the end of August to get clear away by car from Kabul and into Tirah before the Afghan Government could set their machinery in motion to stop him. It is probable that he believed his father's name would gain him support in the Eastern Province, but this belief was doomed to disappointment. Strong action by both Governments, coupled with immediate opposition from Afghan Shinwaris, caused the Afridi lashkars which had gathered to his standard to retire and disperse a few days after crossing the border. Political pressure by the Government of India on the Afridis forced Ghulam Ahmed to leave their country, and shortly afterwards he surrendered to the authorities in Kurram.

The outcome of the affair was most welcome, and, though the Government of India were perhaps fortunate in finding in Ghulam Ahmed an opponent of no great moral stamina, the result was the removal of a potential danger which might have been gravely embarrassing to the Afghan Government at this particular time. They were correspondingly gratified, while at the same time reiterating their belief that the political authorities could, or at any rate should, have been

able to liquidate Ghulam Ahmed in a much shorter time and without assistance from the air.

At the root of this belief lies the main difference between the attitude of the Afghan and Indian Governments towards the frontier problem, and accounts for, though it may not justify, the former's frequent interference with tribes on the Indian side of the Durand line. This difference is interesting and worth discussing, but in doing so I am aware that I am embarking on an exceedingly controversial question. I touch on the matter with considerable diffidence, realising that, after many years in a country in which I have met with nothing but kindness, I am likely to have a biased view of its inhabitants and their ways. At the same time it is a question which should not be ignored in these letters, and, if in the following paragraphs I appear to be "more Afghan than the Afghans," it is merely because I am trying to explain an attitude which appears to us here not to be entirely illogical or unreasonable, though in practice it may be, from international standpoints, untenable.

The first point to consider is the character of the Afghans, particularly of the rulers. Our unfortunate experiences in the first Afghan war gave to the Afghans a name for deceit and treachery which has become proverbial. Their actions and attitude were not unlike those of our ancestors of about 300 years ago, and, although this fact does not justify them, I sometimes wonder what we in our more civilised days would do in similar circumstances to those obtaining in 1841. If we merely change the locality and consider a foreign army, invading our country, quartering itself on our home town, requisitioning supplies, treating our chief men with scant courtesy, and, above all things, playing about with our women, for a space of two years and more, I wonder what we would do if the tide turned, as it turned in Kabul in the autumn of 1841, and we saw the morale of our enemy dwindling, his leadership bankrupt, and starvation and disaster staring him in the face. We might not go about the business of destroying him in quite the same way as the Afghans did in that dreadful retreat through the snow in January 1842, but I do not think we should be over scrupulous in our dealings with him. At the same time I have no desire to whitewash the Afghans. They are still a very primitive people with a fanatical hatred of foreign domination. If a foreigner invades their country with armed forces they have only one object—to get him out of the country and destroy him by any means open to them, fair or foul.

But in peace we have found their rulers to be on the whole men of their word, astute in their dealings and hard bargainers, but generally honest and honourable. The great Ameer Dost Muhammad suffered much at our hands, but after his return to Kabul in 1843 he remained loyal to his engagements to us till his death in 1863, and his attitude probably saved the frontier for us in 1857. Sher Ali was on the whole more sinned against than sinning, the Ameer Abdur Rahman and Habibullah both fulfilled their general obligations in spite of many temptations to do otherwise, even the wretched Amanullah kept his personal promises.

And so when one comes to the present dynasty it is, I think, reasonable to assume, until there is proof to the contrary, that they will abide by the promises they have made, and it is useful to look back to 1930 and see just what promises King Nadir Shah did make to my predecessor about his dealings on the frontier. They were these:—

- (1) The Afghan Government would not summon tribesmen from the Indian side of the line to "jirgas" (tribal meetings) in Afghanistan.
- (2) The Afghan Government would not employ Indian tribesmen as Afghan khassadars (tribal police) in Indian territory.
- (3) The whole frontier policy of the Afghan Government would be actuated by a desire for peace on both sides of the frontier, and a spirit of true friendship towards His Majesty's Government.

Of these undertakings one can say that the Afghan Government have kept the first, and that they have kept to the letter, if not entirely to the spirit, of the second. But what of the third? Have they or have they not carried out their undertakings under this head? This is the crux of the whole matter.

Somewhere about 1936 an Indian gentleman visited Kabul and, while staying in this legation, had interviews with the Prime and Foreign Minister, to whom I introduced him. As a result of these interviews, he carried back to

Peshawar a tale, which, curiously enough, he never mentioned to me or to his host, that King Nadir Shah had left behind him a last will and testament in which he had enjoined his successors to preserve the equilibrium of the frontier, or, in other words, to maintain Afghan influence in the tribal areas on both sides of the border. If this tale is true, it would appear that Nadir Shah had not kept to his undertakings. I can only say here that exhaustive enquiries have produced no proof of the existence of this document, and that, as Nadir Shah was cut off suddenly in the prime of life, it is on the whole unlikely that he had prepared anything of the sort.

On the other hand, although this document may never have existed, we know that Afghan influence does remain in our tribal areas, and that it is maintained by the payment of allowances to men who, as often as not, are hostile to us, and by the maintenance of informers and agents who form the core of the "Afghan party" on the Indian side of the frontier. Is there any explanation of this fact save that the Afghans, while professing friendship and goodwill, are, in fact, acting against us, and are determined to maintain their influence in the tribal areas in case they may some day wish to use it against us? I will give you the Afghan explanation, as it has so frequently been given to me by the Prime Minister. It is as follows:—

The three main functions of Governments are: (a) To guard their country against external aggression; (b) to prevent internal commotion; and (c) to promote the economic prosperity and cultural progress of their people. In regard to (a), possible aggressors against Afghanistan are Iran, Russia and Britain. Iran, though once dangerous, has now apparently ceased to covet Herat. Russia is always a menace, and particularly at present, but, although in times of stress, for example, at the time of the Shami Pir incident, old suspicions are still revived in certain quarters, Britain has ceased to be looked on as having designs on this country. In these circumstances the tribal areas are no longer considered to be a necessary defence against possible British aggression. This is all the more the case, since neither in 1838 nor 1879 did these areas form any real obstacle to British aggression, and, with the development of air power, they are even less so to-day. It is useless to keep a "prickly hedge" on the border of your estate if your neighbours can jump over it. This is the general attitude of the Afghan Government and is based on the presumption that Britain will always retain in some form or other control over the destinies of India. (We need not discuss here what would happen if for any reason she ceased to do so. Such a possibility involves a consideration of the whole question of the balance of power in Central Asia, which is rather beyond the scope of this letter.)

As regards (b), the tribes are a definite menace to the internal peace of this country. Until the time arrives, if it ever does, when the Afghan Government have a standing army and air force of sufficient strength and mobility to take on a combination of, say, all the Ghilzai clans, or of the Mohmands, Khugianis and Shinwaris of the Eastern Province, or of the tribes of Khost, there will always be a risk that at any moment a tribal rising in force may overwhelm the Government in Kabul. The tribal menace is at the very doors of the city, it extends all along their main trade routes to India, and it is never out of the thoughts of the Prime Minister and his advisers. (I do not think this is an illusion, or that we are pandering to Afghan "susceptibilities," when we hold our hand on the frontier in answer to their representations. The real point is how far we are prepared to risk the downfall of this Government and the consequent probability of chaos in the buffer State with its repercussions all along our frontiers and up into Central Asia in order to gain some local objective on the frontier.)

As to (c), there is evolving in this country a new order. Young men are coming on who have had a European education and some experience of the civilisation of the West. They are very pleasant to deal with and full of ideas about the spread of education, the economic development of their country, town planning, cultural progress, and so on. They are very hardworking and very sensitive. They hate being laughed at, dislike intensely things like the purdah system, their dreadful roads, their mud-built capital, published photographs of a woman in a "bourkah" riding on a donkey, Rosita Forbes's title for her book about Afghanistan, *The Forbidden Road*; anything in fact which reminds them of what they are all painfully aware, or suggests that Afghanistan has not

progressed much, if at all, further than Tibet. Above all things they hate the frontier tribes and their mullahs, who represent the old lawless Afghanistan, priest-ridden, fanatical and reactionary. (The danger about these young men is that when they really control the Government they may go too fast, and in their haste fail to take sufficient account of the tribal menace.)

These are the three main factors affecting the Afghan Government's attitude to the frontier problem. Its solution is of at least as great importance to them as it is to us, and they will co-operate with us whole-heartedly in our efforts to find one, but their ideas as to the methods of attaining the objective are unfortunately, though inevitably, very different from ours. Very briefly they are these:—

They do not believe in coercion save as a last resort. They think that peace should precede control, and not follow it, and that, if it is taken in time and in the right way, nearly every frontier upheaval could be prevented by peaceful means. They recognise that it is easier for them than for us to apply methods of persuasion, partly because they have the influence of Islam behind them, and partly because they know the tribal mentality better than we do. They realise that with what they call our overwhelming force we could at any time "create a desert and call it peace," but the only result would be to place a strain on the Central Government in Kabul which would either bring it down in ruins or cause it to declare war on us through sheer inability to resist the call of Islam.

Therefore, they say, if we are to co-operate with you, and we are fully anxious to do so, it can only be in such a way as to make the tribes realise that such co-operation will be beneficial to them and not the reverse. We believe this can be done to the lasting benefit of both countries. Let us help you with our influence as an Islamic Government over these wild men and let you help us with your civilisation, your money and your organising ability to evolve a more peaceful order on the frontier, and to remove this standing menace to your peace of mind and to our security and progress. When that is done we will cease to pay blackmail to your tribesmen against their threat to our existence, we will no longer intrigue across your borders, and we will observe in all its sanctity the international boundary of the Durand line. But until that time comes you must forgive us if we do or do not do these things. We believe that our actions are not departing from Nadir's promise to act in "a spirit of true friendship towards His Majesty's Government," because, as we see it, these methods are at present the only means we have of helping towards the peace of the border and the continuance of our existence as a Government.

I do not propose to comment on this point of view. This letter is too long already, and in any case I am not competent to do so. Much of what I have written here I am also putting into more official form, which will reach London and Delhi before long, and give the frontier experts an opportunity to answer the Afghans. To the layman certain difficulties are to be seen, among them the probability that the Afghan tribal problem is not nearly so difficult as the Indian, where the question of how to prevent the hungry highlander descending on to the fat trans-Indus plains and carrying off the fatter Hindu has no parallel in the lean Afghan valleys. But, in spite of this and many other snags, it is possible that some workable plan of co-operation may be evolved.

W. K. FRASER-TYTLER.

[N 1789/82/97]

No. 20.

Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Government of India, External Affairs Department, dated February 10, 1940.—(Repeated to Kabul and Angora; Communicated by India Office; Received February 11.)

(No. 698.)

(Telegraphic.)

ADDRESSED by the Secretary of State for India to Government of India and repeated to Kabul No. 30 and Angora No. 111.

Katodon No. 24 of 4th February. Military assistance for Afghanistan. Foreign Office consider it would be unwise to delay any longer in making some

communication to Turkish Government. It is therefore proposed to ask His Majesty's Ambassador, Angora, to mention matter orally to Turkish Government on lines suggested in Forminka No. 180 of 16th December. Ambassador would be instructed to explain that question of British assistance in training and equipping Afghan army is at present under consideration by authorities in India as a result of approach made to us by Afghan Government in view of possible danger of Soviet aggression against Afghanistan.

Communication to Turkish Government would be in quite general terms and it seems unnecessary to inform Afghan Government before taking this action.

Please consult Fraser-Tytler and telegraph whether you see any objection.

[N 1710/941/97]

No. 21.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received February 11.)

(No. 30.)

(Telegraphic.)

Kabul, February 11, 1940.

CONTINUATION of Katodon telegram No. 14 of 23rd January :—

2. Certain amount of pessimism is apparent as spring approaches. It is held in some quarters that, in order to restore prestige of the Red army, some easy campaign will have to be undertaken in the spring as an offset against failure in Finland, and Afghanistan is looked on as likeliest objective. This attitude is probably due to German propaganda and is not widespread.

3. General attitude continues increasingly in favour of cause of democracies, and anti-Russian feeling is growing.

(Repeated to Foreign, New Delhi.)

[N 1663/82/97]

No. 22.

Telegram from Secretary of State to Government of India, External Affairs Department, dated February 14, 1940.—(Repeated to Minister, Kabul; Communicated by India Office; Received February 15.)

(No. 756.)

(Telegraphic.)

ADDRESSED to Government of India; repeated to Kabul. No. 33.

Following for Caroe from Peel :—

“Forminkas Nos. 23 and 24 of 4th February Afghan-Soviet relations and military assistance for Afghan Government.

“We are anxious that definite decisions should be reached as soon as possible in order to avoid any possibility of Afghan accusation of undue delay in replying to their proposals. We should therefore be grateful for Government of India's views at an early date after consultation with Fraser-Tytler in India.

“2. On receipt of your views it will be necessary to consider referring again to War Cabinet whole question of assistance for Afghanistan against Soviet aggression in light of recent developments. Meanwhile our preliminary view, with which Foreign Office would probably concur, is that, in order to smooth course of negotiations with Afghan Government in military matters and assist in stiffening Afghan determination to resist possible Soviet aggression, there is much to be said for giving Afghan Government now some more definite guarantee in event of attack by Russia. This might perhaps be given in form of confidential assurance that His Majesty's Government would regard Soviet attack on Afghanistan as *casus belli*. It would, of course, have to be made clear to Afghan Government that we must be free to determine how best we could assist in her defence, but that in any event we could not undertake an obligation for the military defence of their Northern frontier. Foreign Office are inclined to feel that there might still be advantage from Afghan point of view vis-à-vis Russia in an *open* agreement of mutual assistance with Afghan Government, but this would naturally depend on attitude of Afghan Government.

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"3. If it were possible to give Afghan Government some confidential statement as to our attitude in event of a Soviet attack, this would provide a basis on which it would be easier to advise them frankly on their military plans, and on consequential questions of training and equipment.

"4. As regards supply of arms and equipment, list of requirements submitted by Afghan War Minister to Molesworth seems excessive and we have not thought it worth while to give matter any detailed examination pending receipt of your views. Fraser-Tytler seems to have dealt with this question very successfully in discussion with Prime Minister. It is possible that we might succeed in obtaining larger credit than sum mentioned in paragraph 4 of Forminka 96, but there will still remain difficulty of His Majesty's Government supplying arms, &c., in present circumstances. In any case we imagine you would agree that grant of credit for armaments should be considered as part of whole scheme of military assistance and should be made dependent on Afghan acceptance of advice in reorganisation and training of Afghan army."

[N 2064/82/97]

No. 23.

Government of India, External Affairs Department, to Secretary of State for India.—(Communicated by India Office; Received February 16.)

(No. 478.)

(Telegraphic.)

New Delhi, February 15, 1940.

ADDRESSED to Secretary of State for India; repeated to Angora, copy by post to Kabul.

Your telegram No. 698 of 11th February.

2. Fraser-Tytler, whom we have consulted, telegraphs:—

Military assistance for Afghanistan.

"2. References are not available. I consider that from local point of view it would be preferable to make no communication until definite determination has been reached as to what form assistance will take and how far we can meet Afghan requests for war material.

"3. It seems probable that proposed communication to Turkish Government will be repeated to Afghans, who will jump to the conclusion that their requests are being met in full (? and omitted) will be consequently more disappointed if this turns out not to be the case. It must also be realised that if we do not go considerable way to meet their wishes over war material Afghan Government may decide not to accept assistance in training at all.

"4. I realise, however, that general considerations of obligation towards Saadabad States may outweigh local point of view."

3. We do not altogether agree with Fraser-Tytler's views and think it desirable that the Turkish Government should be informed as soon as possible more or less on the lines proposed in Forminka telegram No. 180 of 16th December. We think, however, as little as possible should be said about equipment, both for reasons stated in paragraph No. 3 of Fraser-Tytler's telegram and because we do not know to what extent it will be possible or desirable to supply equipment required. The communication might perhaps be to the following effect: "As a result of approach made by the Afghan Government and in view of the possible danger of Soviet aggression against Afghanistan, the Government of India have been discussing with that Government the possibility of giving them assistance in the military sphere, including assistance in training officers of the Afghan army, which would not conflict with the work of the Turkish Mission. The Turkish Government will, if necessary, be informed of developments in due course. Meanwhile it is hoped that they will do their best to persuade the Afghan Government to look to the British for assistance."

4. We suspect that the Afghans are hanging back from fear of Russia and that what they want from us is chiefly money. They will probably try to turn elsewhere for the personnel (we have reason to believe they have already applied elsewhere for the personnel for their road expansion policy) and possibly for material also, though this is not so likely.

5. In view of the above it is important that the Turks should back us and do their best to persuade the Afghans to trust us and accept such assistance as we are willing to give them.

6. Presence of Faiz Muhammad in Kabul (*cf.*, Angora telegram No. 12 of 12th February) will afford the Turkish Ambassador excellent opportunity of taking the matter up through him with the Afghan Government. This affords another reason for not postponing the approach to the Turkish Government.

[N 2064/82/97]

No. 24.

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora).

(No. 134.)

(Telegraphic.)

Foreign Office, February 27, 1940.

GOVERNMENT of India's telegram No. 478 [of 15th February] repeated to you [Military assistance for Afghanistan].

You should now mention matter orally to Turkish Government on lines suggested in paragraph 3 of Government of India's telegram, except that (a) it would be better to say, "some form of assistance in the military sphere, such as assistance in training officers", &c., and (b) instead of last sentence it would be sufficient to say that "Turkish Government will no doubt agree as to desirability of closer collaboration between Afghan and British Governments in military matters."

(Repeated to Kabul, No. 37, and Government of India, No. 925.)

[N 2641/82/97]

No. 25.

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Viscount Halifax.—(Received March 2.)

(No. 179.)

(Telegraphic.)

Angora, March 1, 1940.

YOUR telegram No. 134.

I spoke accordingly to Minister for Foreign Affairs on the 1st March. His Excellency made no observation, but nodded in agreement.

(Repeated to Kabul, Government of India.)

[N 2860/62/97]

No. 26.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received March 8.)

(No. 15.)

HIS Majesty's Minister, Kabul, presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and, with reference to Katodon telegram No. 26, dated the 9th February, 1940, has the honour to transmit herewith a copy of a personal letter No. 514, dated the 8th February, 1940, from His Majesty's Minister, Kabul, to his Excellency Sardar Ali Muhammad Khan, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Kabul, respecting the Ahmedzai salient.

Kabul, February 10, 1940.

Enclosure in No. 26.

Personal letter No. 514, dated February 8, 1940, from His Majesty's Minister, Kabul, to His Excellency Sardar Ali Muhammad Khan, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Kabul.

YOUR Excellency is possibly aware that during the last few months the peace of the Bannu District of the North-West Frontier Province has been very seriously disturbed by raids and kidnappings carried out by bad characters from beyond the district. The unrest which has led up to the present situation began

some eighteen months ago when a serious raid took place on Bannu City. It has continued ever since and culminated last week in a raid on Bannu Hospital and an attack on Serai Naurang near Bannu. The situation has become intolerable and my Government have now decided to take certain action in order to put a stop to raiding and kidnapping, and for the protection of towns, villages and the main lines of communication with the district.

2. My Government therefore propose to undertake operations in the Ahmedzai territory, which is under the control of the Deputy Commissioner, Bannu. This territory consists of a small area situated between the Kohat and Bannu Districts and to the east of Thal-Spinwam-Mir Ali road. The area is a considerable distance from the Durand line and is surrounded, except for a short distance on its eastern side, by roads and lines of communication already in occupation. It is very near to Bannu City and forms a harbourage for outlaws and other bad characters who for the past eighteen months have been disturbing the peace of the district.

3. These operations are now being undertaken, and, although they are not likely to fall under the definition of "major operations," I am informing your Excellency of the circumstances in order that the Afghan Government may be aware of the reasons which have compelled my Government to take the action described above.

[N 3037/26/97]

No. 27.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received March 11.)

(No. 6.)

My Lord,

Kabul, January 15, 1940.

WITH reference to your Lordship's circular despatch dated the 4th November, I have the honour to forward as an enclosure to this despatch a brief review of political tendencies in Afghanistan during the year 1939.

2. I am sending a copy of this despatch, with enclosure, to the Secretary of State for India and to the Government of India.

I have, &c.

W. K. FRASER-TYTLER.

Enclosure in No 27.

Political Review of the Year 1939.

EXTERNAL.

The Pre-War Period.

FOR the first eight months of 1939 the external policy of the Afghan Government followed the trend of previous years. This policy has been consistently directed to the maintenance of good relations with the three States lying on the Afghan borders, and to the formation of as close ties as possible with His Majesty's Government and the Government of India. Relations with other foreign States are not intended to be on other than an economic or cultural basis.

2. In theory this policy held the field until the outbreak of war. In practice, however, the close economic and cultural ties between Afghanistan and Germany were having effect; German influence was penetrating all branches of activity in the country, and a trade agreement, signed in Kabul in August, had it been put into effect, would have brought the two countries into still closer relations.

3. Of the other non-limitrophe States the most important in the Afghan political field is Turkey, with whom Afghanistan has continued to maintain very cordial relations. Although Turkey no longer represents the spiritual head of the Mahometan world, she is looked on by the Afghans as the leader of secular Islam, partly by virtue of her position at the gateway of Europe, and

partly by the example she has set of late years of a progressive and reliable Government. Turkish influence in Kabul is strong, much assistance is given to the Afghan Government by Turkish medical and military advisers, and the ambassador is looked on as a friend and guide whose word carries much weight. None other of the more distant States has any real influence. Italy's interests received a severe set-back after the seizure of Albania. Japan is looked on with the dislike and fear attached to aggressor States, and France remains aloof and disinterested, save in archæological and to some small extent in cultural matters.

4. Relations with Iran remained unchanged through the year. There was an exchange of courtesies at the time of the Crown Prince's wedding, and a settlement of the Helmand water question removed a long-standing source of irritation between the two Governments, but sectarian differences and the fundamental contempt of each country for the other continue to act as a bar to close political relations.

5. Up to the outbreak of war Afghan relations with Russia were confined to trade exchanges and to frontier disputes. The former of these came to an end with the termination of the trade agreement in July, and the latter abated to some extent after the Russians had agreed to accept the thalweg of the Oxus as the northern boundary and to a fresh demarcation of that portion of the frontier which lies between the Oxus and the frontier town of Kushk. Some uneasiness was caused at the negotiations for a pact between the Russian and British Governments during the summer, and fears were aroused lest His Majesty's Government might purchase Russian assistance in Europe at the price of a free hand in Asia for the Soviet Government. The Afghan Government were assured that the British Government had no intention of allowing the *status quo* in Central Asia to be disturbed.

6. The opening of the year saw Afghan-British relations in a somewhat uneasy state, owing to the possibilities of trouble on the frontier in the spring. These fears were happily not realised, and apart from continued unrest in Waziristan, which has not, in fact, given rise to repercussions in Afghanistan where the tribes of the Southern Province seem to have lost interest in the Faqir of Ipi, the frontier remained on the whole peaceful throughout the summer.

7. This absence of friction in the frontier areas gave the Afghan Government opportunity to take stock of their general relations with His Majesty's Government. Their fears were being roused by the growing tension in Europe, and their attention was attracted to the guarantees of assistance given by His Majesty's Government to Poland and other possible victims of aggression, which appeared to them to have taken the place of the "collective security" which they had at one time hoped to receive from the League of Nations. For several years the present Afghan Government have sought a more definite relationship with the British Government; feeling with an almost uncanny prescience that sooner or later the Russian "menace" would once more loom large on their northern border, and realising that without external help they stood no chance against modern mechanised armies. Many difficulties have stood in the way of any concrete response being given to their requests beyond an assurance of diplomatic support. Among these have been the possible effect on the people of Afghanistan itself of any very close relationship between the British and Afghan Governments, and the reluctance of His Majesty's Government to depart from their traditional policy of not committing themselves in advance to a course of action which might depend on factors beyond their immediate control.

8. In the spring of 1939, however, it appeared to the Afghan Government that the guarantee to Poland marked a change in this policy. From the point of view of the Prime Minister and his advisers the integrity and independence of Afghanistan was at least as important to His Majesty's Government as was that of Poland. In July, therefore, His Royal Highness once more raised with His Majesty's Minister the whole question of the relations between the two Governments, with particular reference to the possible menace of Russia. His requests for guarantees to Afghanistan and for assistance in building up her defences were conveyed to His Majesty's Government and to the Government of India. In reply, a proposal was made for a pact of mutual assistance and co-operation, both in respect to possible aggression on either country and also to future co-operation in frontier affairs. The outline of the proposed agreement was conveyed to the Afghan Government in the latter half of August, and was received by them with much satisfaction.

The War Period.

9. The foregoing is a brief outline of the external political relations of Afghanistan up to the outbreak of the war. The Afghan Government did not for the first few days of the war fully realise the effect of the German-Russian pact on their political future. The invasion of Poland by Russia opened their eyes, however, to the fact that the danger which they had long foreseen of aggression from the north had become more definite. As soon as they realised this, and also realised the complete cynicism of the Hitler régime towards the future of small and weak nations, their general attitude towards international affairs underwent a swift change. The dominant feeling was fear of Russian aggression, and to such an extent were they influenced by this that they decided with some precipitation not to proceed further with the Anglo-Afghan pact lest their negotiations with Britain should arouse to a dangerous extent the ever-present suspicions and jealousies of the Soviet Government.

10. In spite of this, however, the proposals for the pact made a profound impression on the Prime Minister and his advisers. This offer of British support and assistance, combined with their fear of Russia and their dislike of the German-Russian agreement, caused a very strong revulsion of feeling away from Germany and towards the Allies. These factors had also the effect of rallying the people of Afghanistan to a degree hitherto unknown in support of the present Government, and, although German and Russian propaganda has continued unrelentingly and with some effect in its attempt to undermine the British position in Afghanistan, the general feeling of the Afghan people is now probably more pro-British than it has ever been.

11. Although fear of Russia has remained a dominant factor, the signature of the Turkish agreement in October helped to restore confidence, and during the last few weeks the failure of Russian aggression in Finland has encouraged the Afghan Ministers. At the time when they felt themselves obliged with much regret to discontinue further negotiations for the Anglo-Afghan pact, the Prime Minister expressed a hope that, although no pact was being signed, His Majesty's Government would be able to implement such part of the proposed agreement as could be carried through without rousing Russian hostility. In pursuance of this proposal the Government of India made the suggestion that two Staff officers should visit Kabul in December, and discuss possible ways and means of assisting the Afghan Government in the training of their forces. By the middle of December the Afghan Government had recovered sufficiently from their panic of September to be able to agree to this proposal, provided that the officers should come to Kabul in as unostentatious a manner as possible. This was agreed to, and shortly before Christmas a series of talks took place between officers of the Indian General Staff and the Afghan Prime and War Ministers. These talks appear to have impressed the Afghan Government with the fact that the proposed assistance, though limited in scope, was genuine in its intention, and, although these preliminary conversations led to no concrete results, they had the effect of causing the Afghan Government seriously to consider whether it would not be practicable to revive negotiations for the proposed pact in some form or other. At the close of the year, the question whether the Afghan Government should not take the bold step of entering into closer relations with His Majesty's Government in matters of defence was under active consideration in Kabul.

INTERNAL.

12. Within the country the year 1939 has shown the further development of two forms of opposition to the present Government. The first of these is the Republican party, composed mainly of malcontents within and without the Government, of merchants discontented with the Government's economic policy, and of personal opponents to the Ruling House. This party is led by three able and ambitious men, but, in a country where any form of overt opposition to the Government is not tolerated, its activities are perforce conducted in secrecy. Only in times of stress does it make its presence felt, and it was fortunate for the Government in power that circumstances should have so shaped themselves at the outbreak of war as to cause a general rally round the Ruling House. Fear of Russia consolidated the Afghan people to an extent never before manifested, and the Republican party wisely decided that this was not the time to attempt to divide the country against itself.

13. The second political development which has troubled the Government during the past year is the rise of the Young Afghan party. This party is in reality the first, and inevitable, manifestation of the contact of Afghanistan with the outside world. Its leaders are younger members of the Royal House, and it includes the majority of the *intelligentsia* who have been educated abroad, or who have received advanced education at home. Its policy is progress and development in every sphere of political, economic and cultural life, and it finds itself in opposition to the present Government mainly through a desire to quicken up the machine of progress, which in the hands of older, and probably wiser, men moves through the intricacies of foreign and domestic politics at a slow and cautious pace. The activities of some members of this party have already caused the Government anxiety in recent months, and, however much one may sympathise with their aims, it is to be hoped that they will restrain themselves at any rate until the future of Central Asia is more clearly defined.

14. The party of the ex-King Amanullah has not shown much activity in the last twelve months. So far as internal politics are concerned, this party may be considered to be very nearly, though perhaps not quite, a spent force, and the Government no longer feel apprehensive of his achieving success provided that any attempt he might now make to regain the throne was not backed by strong armed forces from outside the country. Justification for this belief was found in an attempt made in August by a certain Ghulam Ahmed to raise a force of Afridis in Tirah, on behalf of the ex-King, with the object of bringing about an anti-Government rising in the Eastern Province. The Afridis, relying on support from inside the Eastern Province, crossed the Afghan border in small numbers at the beginning of September, only to find that the Afghan tribes had no sympathy whatever for their cause. Whereupon the Afridis retired, being assisted in so doing by the firm action of both Governments, and the movement collapsed as quickly as it had begun.

15. At the same time it would be rash to suppose that the ex-King's party is no longer a danger to the stability of the present Government. An emissary of the type of Said-al-Keilani (Shami Pir) might still stir up turbulent elements across the border in Waziristan, to an extent which might seriously affect the peace of the Southern Province. And it is quite possible that the Soviet Government, should they turn their attention to Afghanistan, might attempt to justify their action as they did in the case of Finland, by setting up a puppet Government on the banks of the Oxus, with Amanullah or one of his adherents as its head, and with a backing of Russian troops.

[N 3148/82/97]

No. 28.

Government of India, External Affairs Department, to Secretary of State for India.-- (Communicated by India Office; Received March 13.)

(No. 769.)

(Telegraphic.)

New Delhi, March 12, 1940.

ADDRESSED Secretary of State for India; repeated to Kabul, No. 95.

Your telegram No. 756 of 14th February.

We have considered the whole field of policy in Afghanistan during the war, as it appears to us, in conference with Fraser-Tytler. We are convinced that it is essential to maintain the policy which has held the field for many years, that of maintenance of the integrity of Afghanistan, and to do everything possible to keep Russia from nearer approach to India. We are agreed that to this end some assurance should be given that His Majesty's Government would meet Soviet aggression on Afghanistan by declaration of war. In coming to this conclusion we are particularly impressed by the need for being assured of Moslem support both in India and outside, and we have no doubt failure to meet Russian aggression in Afghanistan would lead to serious deterioration of the Moslem situation in India. The Punjab and Bengal, where the Constitution is being worked, are particularly in point, while the effect of inaction on the North-West Frontier tribes would be incalculable. We agree also generally with the statement of the position contained in paragraph No. 5 of Katodon 23.

2. It is necessary to determine what would constitute aggression. This might take the form of—

- (a) Attempt by Amanullah or one of his party to stage *coup d'État* with financial support of the Soviet, but without military support.
- (b) Political pressure by Soviet to obtain foothold in Afghanistan ostensibly for commercial purposes.
- (c) Establishment of a puppet government in Northern Afghanistan supported by Soviet forces.
- (d) Direct invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet.

In the case of (a) or (b), warning by His Majesty's Government to the Soviet that we would assist the Afghans to maintain their integrity might suffice; (c) or (d) we consider should be a *casus belli*.

3. Form of secret assurance offered to Afghans in respect to military aid in the event of a *casus belli* should in our judgment make the following points clear: (a) that we regard the actual defence of Afghan territory to be primarily the (? responsibility) of Afghan defence forces, and (b) that in the event of Soviet aggression armed assistance by His Majesty's Government will be limited to offensive air action against Soviet bases and lines of communication by aircraft operating from bases in India and/or Middle East, but will *not* include despatch of land or air forces into Afghanistan itself.

4. We agree there is much to be said in favour of open declaration of British attitude in order to deter aggression and suggest object would be best served by conclusion of open pact with the Afghan Government on the lines of that enclosed in Foreign Office letter of the 1st January, 1940, combined with secret assurance to the Afghan Government that Soviet aggression will be met by declaration of war, the exact circumstances in which declaration would be made being explained somewhat on the lines of the four possibilities suggested in paragraph No. 2 above. Secret assurance would have to make clear that armed assistance in the event of Soviet aggression would be limited by considerations mentioned in paragraph No. 3. Fraser-Tytler's tentative view is that there should be hope of persuading the Afghans to enter into open pact if secret assurance combined with other measures of assistance can be made sufficiently definite.

5. *Military assistance*.—We agree that military assistance should be given in the form of provision of armaments and training of Afghan army and air force, but only provided Afghans are willing to accept our advice in the organisation of their defence forces and their strategical plans.

6. *Credits*.—Apart from difficulties in supplying armaments from United Kingdom or India, and necessity of meeting our own requirements first, we feel that arms and equipment should be limited to quantity and types necessary for training on our advice. For these reasons military assistance can only be given on small scale to begin with, and we advise that difference should be made up by grant of credits for commercial assistance—see Katodon telegram No. 16 of the 1st February. Plan would then be to offer credits over five-year period on increasing scale for armaments and decreasing scale for commercial purposes. In considering this matter we were influenced by information that His Majesty's Government have just granted credits for 5 million pounds sterling to Iran without distinction as between armaments and commercial credits. Scale of credits would require careful consideration, not without reference to those granted to Persia. We would suggest total amount for armaments and commercial purposes for period of five years should not exceed $2\frac{1}{2}$ million pounds sterling, unless examination of Afghans' capacity to spend and repay justified larger sum (they have actually asked for $12\frac{1}{2}$ million pounds sterling commercial, and some 5 million pounds sterling military credits). Fraser-Tytler thinks that, in return for credits Afghans would agree to make purchases in India and United Kingdom and to divert their produce to and through same countries.

7. *Incidence*.—To meet subsidies and other expenditure classed as "political" as opposed to "defence" expenditure, we are prepared to increase annual contribution to Afghan fund to Rs 25 lakhs per annum during the war. But in context of these discussions credits for armaments and commercial expansion must be regarded as expenditure on external defence of India, and therefore, subject to qualification below, to be met by His Majesty's Government under the recent defence financial settlement. Exception might be that commercial credits

would be underwritten by India to the extent that they were spent in India. Credits for armaments outside the capacity of enlarged Afghan fund would be liability of His Majesty's Government.

8. On hearing your views we will prepare draft suggested secret assurance. Fraser-Tytler is in general agreement with these conclusions subject to two provisos :—

- (a) He emphasises the importance of grant of assistance to Afghanistan on scale approximately equal to that given to Iran.
- (b) He thinks that in order to maintain Afghan morale some stiffening of Afghan resistance by land will be needed at an early stage.

As regards latter point our views are definitely stated in paragraph No. 3 above.

[N 4093/941/97]

No. 29.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received April 8.)

(No. 73.)

(Telegraphic.)

Kabul, April 8, 1940.

INTERNAL situation is quiet and general attitude continues strongly pro-Ally. Fear of aggression in the near future persists, though without any apparent foundation at present, and anti-Russian propaganda is being widely spread, particularly by mullahs.

Opinion appears to be hardening in the direction of more definite attitude on the part of the Government in favour of British. This trend of thought has probably been encouraged by recent visit to Kabul of Afghan Ambassador to Turkey, who emphasised that only method of safeguarding religion and integrity of the country was to follow Turkish example of alliance with the British and French Governments.

(Repeated to Foreign New Delhi. Continuation of Katodon, No. 46 of 9th February [*sic*: ? 9th March].)

[N 4098/82/97]

No. 30.

Telegram from Secretary of State to Government of India, External Affairs Department, dated April 10, 1940.—(Repeated to Kabul; Communicated by India Office; Received April 10.)

(No. 1708.)

(Telegraphic.)

ADDRESSED by Secretary of State for India to Government of India and repeated to Kabul, No. 63.

Your telegram No. 769 of the 24th March. Afghan policy. Issues discussed in paragraphs 1-4 of your telegram have now been carefully considered by War Cabinet. His Majesty's Government agree as to necessity for maintaining traditional policy of preserving independence and integrity of Afghanistan. In reaching decisions on action now to be taken, they have, moreover, been greatly influenced by weight of arguments stressed in paragraph 1 of your telegram, and in paragraph 5 of Katodon 23 of the 4th February in regard to reactions on Moslem opinion both in India and elsewhere. This seems the more important in view of widespread propaganda among small neutral States alleging that Allies are impotent to give effect to their guarantees or practical expression to their sympathy. Up to date it has been possible to counter such allegations (*e.g.*, in the case of Poland or Finland) by pointing to geographical factors which have made it impossible to send effective assistance, but His Majesty's Government are convinced of disastrous effect on British prestige if we failed to take adequate and visible steps to implement our policy and promises in case of country with which we have common frontier. His Majesty's Government feel that, if Russia were allowed to overcome Afghanistan without our giving the latter our active support, the resulting threats to India, both material and moral, and consequent strain on our resources would be such as greatly to outweigh any risks which

might have to be incurred in supporting Afghan resistance with our own armed forces before it was too late. Fraser-Tytler's opinion has also been noted that in order to maintain Afghan morale some stiffening of their resistance by land forces would be needed at an early stage. In light of the above His Majesty's Government have come to the conclusion that it would not now be possible to restrict armed assistance to Afghanistan within limits proposed in paragraph 3 of your telegram, or to inform Afghan Government that our action would be so restricted.

2. Following decisions have accordingly been reached by His Majesty's Government :—

- (1) That it should be accepted as an essential part of our policy that in the event of Russian aggression against Afghanistan support must be given to the Afghan Government by all means in our power.
- (2) That the Afghan Government should at once be given an assurance that in the event of such action by Soviet forces directed against the independence or integrity of Afghanistan we should be prepared to give them all the assistance in our power, including (in the event of invasion by Soviet forces, *i.e.*, case (c) or (d) in paragraph 2 of your telegram) the immediate provision of some measure of assistance by land forces from India in addition to air support (though we could not undertake an obligation for the military defence of northern frontier of Afghanistan).
- (3) That the views of the Afghan Government should again be invited on question of conclusion of an overt agreement on the lines proposed in Forminka 96 of the 14th September, 1939.
- (4) His Majesty's Government desire that you should at once be consulted as to measures which Government of India consider that they could themselves take immediately in the event of Russian aggression, in order to strengthen Afghan morale and as an earnest of our intentions, and that the Government of India should be requested to be prepared to undertake such measures without delay.
- (5) Question of best means of providing such forces as might subsequently be required for effective co-operation in defence of Southern Afghanistan is being referred to Chiefs of Staff. I am sending you a separate telegram regarding this.
- (6) As one possible measure of assistance to Afghan Government His Majesty's Government suggest that you should consider whether we could not usefully recruit considerable numbers of our tribesmen as levies to fight in the cause of their Afghan co-religionists against the Soviet Union, if required.

3. In order that Fraser-Tytler may be instructed to approach Afghan Government in accordance with decision in paragraph 2 (2) above, I shall be glad if you will telegraph your views urgently as to measures envisaged in paragraph 2 (4). Subject to Government of India's views I suggest that such measures might perhaps as a minimum consist, in addition to air support, of the immediate despatch of a strong military mission to Kabul, together with a nucleus of technical troops.

4. Question of credits and supply of armaments to Afghanistan is being separately considered.

[N 4333/1483/97]

No. 31.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received April 13.)

(No. 77.)

(Telegraphic.)

Kabul, April 13, 1940.

ADDRESSED to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; repeated to Foreign, New Delhi. Arms for Afghanistan.

2. At recent interview, Foreign Minister informed me that the King had been speaking to him about the supply of arms for the forces in Northern Afghanistan. His Majesty had asked Foreign Minister to inform me that troops in the north were very short of equipment, particularly of rifles, ammunition, machine guns and artillery.

3. He suggested that, pending decision on major question of supply of military equipment, arrangements should be made for the immediate supply of essential armament for these troops. Foreign Minister [? did not] know exact numbers involved but thought force in question was about 5,000 strong.

4. If the supply is possible it would be a useful gesture at present moment.

[N 4592/1483/97]

No. 32.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received April 17.)

(No. 80.)

(Telegraphic.)

Kabul, April 16, 1940.

ARMS.

2. At the audience on the 15th April, King spoke [? to me] at some [? length] [? in this connexion]. I gathered that the main pre-occupation of the Afghan Government at present was to [? provide] sufficient arms and training for forces in Northern Afghanistan to ward off possible attempt at revolution [? by the] Amanullah party [*c.f.*, Katodon, No. 51]. For this purpose they had depleted their reserves at the centre, and wished to replace [? them].

3. It also appeared that their training programme, which was being intensified, had been seriously interrupted by the war which had cut off supplies from Germany of [? instructional] material.

4. I feel that it would be very good policy at present juncture to respond to [? this] [? personal] appeal from the King, provided the essential requirements are moderate as they seem to be. If His Majesty's Government and the Government of India are prepared to agree in principle to request, military attaché could obtain further details from the [? Sovereign].

(Repeated to Foreign, New Delhi. Demi-official for Peel, repeated to Collier and Caroe, Katodon, No. 77.)

[N 5064/34/97]

No. 33.

The Secretary to the Government of India in the External Affairs Department to the Under-Secretary of State for India, London.—(Communicated by India Office; Received April 26.)

Question of Co-operation between the Government of India and the Afghan Government in Foreign Matters.

(Confidential.)

Sir,

New Delhi, February 13, 1940

I AM directed to forward the Government of India's observations on His Majesty's Minister's, Kabul, despatch No. 3 of the 10th January, 1940, on the subject of co-operation between the Afghan Government and the Government of India in frontier matters.

2. In the first place, the Government of India have never contemplated giving a guarantee that their tribes will never interfere in Afghanistan, or that no Afghan refugee will ever be permitted to use the tribal territory on the Indian side of the Durand Line as a base for subversive activities against the Afghan Government. It is obviously quite impossible to give such a guarantee, and all that the Government of India can promise and expect the Afghan Government to promise, is to do their best to prevent such situations arising and to deal with them when they do arise. Such co-operation in frontier matters already exists so far as Government of India are concerned, and they see no objection to its being confirmed by an article in an agreement, or by an exchange of notes, in which provision might also be made for items (a) and (d) in paragraph 3 of Minister's despatch, although much of the ground is already covered in general terms by articles 1 and 11 of the existing treaty.

3. The Government of India find themselves entirely unable to accept Sir Kerr Fraser-Tytler's contention that Afghan officials have "a far more extensive and intimate connexion with the tribal problem than even the most experienced of our frontier officers," *vide* paragraph 11 of his despatch, or that they are men who "really understand" the tribes, *vide* paragraph 15. The

experience of the Government of India is that, although the Afghans have two advantages in dealing with the tribes, viz.—

- (a) the Islamic approach; and
- (b) the fact that they can use methods from which public opinion and our own consciences debar us;

their officials are, generally speaking, so ignorant of tribal affairs and customs, and even of the language spoken by the tribes, so inefficient and often so corrupt, that they are the worst possible media for dealing with the tribes. So much is this the case that Sir Kerr Fraser-Tytler has himself suggested that we should endeavour to train some young Afghan officials in tribal management. His Majesty's Minister has also perhaps forgotten that the Afghan Prime Minister has repeatedly urged that we should, wherever possible, deal with frontier tribes directly through British officers, and dispense with the Indian subordinate officials on the frontier, who are nearly all Afghans by race. It is worthy of note, too, that the whole tendency of the Afghan Government is to ignore tribal custom and to endeavour to deal with the tribes in accordance with laws and fixed principles which are by no means adapted to their present state of civilisation.

4. The Government of India find it difficult to visualise in a concrete form what kind of co-operation in frontier matters His Majesty's Minister and the Afghan Government have in mind, but they are convinced that any form of contominium would only make confusion worse confounded. If the Afghans were really efficient in tribal management, the question of mutually agreed and mutually desired adjustments of the common frontier might be seriously considered. There are, however, obvious dangers in even suggesting such a possibility to the Afghan Government. The Afghans have shown themselves completely unable to control the one considerable portion of tribal territory which has been handed over to them since the Durand Agreement was signed, viz., the Mohmand country between the original Durand Line and the present presumptive frontier, and there is no reason to think they would be more successful elsewhere.

5. While, however, the Government of India are satisfied that any general permission to the Afghan Government to interfere on the Indian side of the Durand Line would be disastrous, they readily admit that there are specific cases in which Afghan co-operation would be useful, and in such cases they would be only too willing to receive offers of co-operation. The kind of case they have in mind is where the influence of an Afghan mullah or other person of standing might be used to pacify a hostile tribe or individual, or the exercise of control or surveillance over elements hostile to them—*e.g.*, Ajab or Shahjui Wazirs—who may withdraw temporarily to Afghan territory or, like the Faqir of Ipi and the Musatalbar hostilities during the last year, may establish themselves in a refuge in the neighbourhood of the Durand Line. It is true they rejected the offer of the Prime Minister in 1937 to pacify the Faqir of Ipi, but the Faqir then had his headquarters at a long distance from the Afghan border, and there is no reason for believing that Afghan interference at that time would have been either salutary or successful. It is incorrect to say that at this time the Faqir was "still obscure." It is not out of place to remark, in order to show the extent to which the Afghans tend to give wrong emphasis to their capacity for influencing our frontier tribesmen, that one of their leading allowance holders among the Mahsuds, Mullah Fazal-Din, has throughout the disturbances in Waziristan been secretly encouraging the hostile elements and that he has now openly come into the field against Government. The Government of India recognise the difficulty at the present stage of inducing the Afghans to withdraw their financial support from elements which are usually hostile to the British connexion, but there can be little doubt that the result of withdrawal would be greatly to curb tribal intransigence and on a long view to secure the common interests of both Governments in the border area.

6. The Government of India cannot but regard the Afghan idea, *vide* paragraph 13 of His Majesty's Minister's despatch, that tribal intransigence can be overcome by peaceful penetration, as Utopian. The suggestion that Pathan tribes can be controlled without a readiness to resort to the application of force in the last resort is, indeed, belied by Afghan action against the Shinwaris, in the Kunar Valley, in Khost, against the Alizai of Kandahar, and, above all, against the Sulaiman Khel in Katawaz. The Afghan Government cannot believe it themselves. Much can no doubt be done by civilising methods backed by force.

but, as has been shown by the Ruler of Swat, the frontier problem will never be really settled until the tribes are disarmed, and this final disarmament of tribal areas in proximity to the international border cannot be concluded effectively until the Afghan Government are strong enough and also willing to embark on operations simultaneously with the Government of India for the disarmament of the tribes on both sides of the Durand Line. It is extremely unlikely that this will happen for many years. Meanwhile it can only be said that the Government of India, as the tribes know well, use every means open to them, persuasion, allowances, service, tribal baramta, and so on, to maintain the peace, and are reluctant to apply force except in the last resort, when tribal raiding and violence has become intolerable.

7. There is much more that could be written on this subject, but as the idea of an Anglo-Afghan Pact appears to be dormant, it has not been considered necessary to deal with the question of co-operation in frontier matters at greater length. Pact or no pact, the Government of India are willing to co-operate on the basis of the four heads enumerated in paragraph 3 of His Majesty's Minister's despatch, and, in addition, to welcome assistance from the Afghan Government on the lines described in paragraph 5 above. Beyond this, in the present circumstances, they would be most reluctant to go.

8. In the Minister's appreciation of the effect on the Afghan mind of the shifting of the political balance within India, given in paragraphs 9 and 10 of his despatch, the Government of India feel bound to concur. It is inevitable that the advance of India towards Dominion status should arouse apprehensions and misunderstandings in the minds of the rulers and subjects of adjacent States. It is the more important that, during this transition stage, there should be no weakening of the hand controlling the defence of India's borders, and that India, still remaining within the Empire, should be recognised as able and willing to play her part in maintaining the traditional policy pursued, with vicissitudes, by India Governments over the century 1840-1940, that of support of the indigenous States fringing her perimeter against absorption by greater Powers.

I have, &c.

O. K. CAROE,

Secretary to the Government of India.

[N 4959/82/97]

No. 34.

Telegram from Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to His Majesty's Minister, Kabul; repeated to Government of India, External Affairs Department. Dated April 27, 1940.—(Communicated by India Office; Received April 28.)

(No. 77. Secret.)

(Telegraphic.)

CORRESPONDENCE ending with Government of India's telegram No. 1199/174 of the 23rd April: Afghan Policy.

2. If Government of India concur you should now at once approach Afghan Prime Minister on following lines in reply to his request (reported in paragraph 2 of Katodon, No. 23 of the 4th February) for clearer definition of His Majesty's Government's attitude in event of Russian attack on Afghanistan:—

- (1) You should convey orally to Prime Minister a secret assurance that in the event of aggression by Soviet forces His Majesty's Government would be prepared to give the Afghan Government all the assistance in their power.
- (2) We consider it important that Molesworth should visit Kabul at an early date to resume conversations with Afghan Government and to discuss with them questions of military co-operation. If you see no objection you should make this proposal to the Prime Minister.
- (3) As regards steps to be taken to implement His Majesty's Government's assurance you should endeavour to keep any discussion with Prime Minister on the general plane pending Molesworth's arrival. Meanwhile, however, if Prime Minister asks for information as to His Majesty's Government's plans, you may inform him that the matter is receiving the close and constant consideration of His Majesty's Government, but that question of strength and disposition of forces

to be made available must obviously depend upon the strategic situation ruling at the time. In any case, however, our assistance would include, in addition to air support, the immediate despatch to Kabul of a strong military mission (if agreeable to Afghan Government) together with a nucleus of technical personnel to advise and assist Afghan Government in every way possible in their preparation and execution of war plans.

- (4) If Mohammed Hashim raises questions (a) of defence of northern frontiers, or (b) of eventual status of northern areas of Afghanistan, you should reply (a) that His Majesty's Government could not undertake an obligation to render direct assistance, except by air action, in military defence of northern frontier; (b) that His Majesty's Government's policy is the preservation of the integrity and independence of Afghanistan, and that their every effort would be directed towards preventing annexation of any part of Afghanistan by any other Power.
- (5) You may also, if necessary, make it clear that our assistance by land and air would be given in no equivocal spirit, and that His Majesty's Government's only desire would be to assist the Afghan Government to maintain their independence and to withdraw as soon as that object has been achieved.

3. I leave it to your discretion whether to raise at this stage the question of renewing offer of open agreement for mutual assistance (see paragraph 2 (3) of India Office telegram No. 1708 of the 10th April), but in any case you need not do more than sound Prime Minister as to his own views on the subject without in any way suggesting that we consider it desirable.

4. Please see India Office telegram No. 2005 repeated in my immediately succeeding telegram.

[N 5064/34/97]

No. 35.

Viscount Halifax to Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler (Kabul).

(No. 36.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, May 9, 1940.

I HAVE read with interest your despatch No. 3 dated the 10th January, 1940, on the subject of co-operation between the Afghan Government and the Government of India in frontier matters together with the Government of India's letter of the 13th February commenting thereon. Your despatch contains a useful explanation of the Afghan Government's attitude, which has to be borne in mind when matters of frontier policy are under consideration.

2. In the first few paragraphs of your despatch you deal with the difficulties which in your view would arise from the inclusion in the proposed pact of mutual assistance of a formal agreement for co-operation on the frontier. I am not sure, however, that there may not have been, at the date of your despatch some misapprehension in regard to the nature of the proposal for the inclusion of a clause relating to co-operation in frontier questions. It was intended that the pact itself should merely assert the principle of co-operation, and that the methods by which the parties would seek to give effect to this principle should be dealt with in a less formal way by an exchange of letters, the content and wording of which could no doubt be discussed separately and subsequently to the negotiation of the pact itself and perhaps preferably would be made the subject of such separate discussions in order to avoid delay in the conclusion of the pact itself. If the Afghan Government preferred not to publish this exchange of letters, the second sentence of article IV of the draft pact forwarded to you with Mr. Collier's demi-official letter of the 30th December, 1939, could of course be omitted. The first sentence of this draft article went no further than to reproduce the proposal contained in paragraph 1 (1) (d) of my telegram No. 96 of the 14th September, 1939, which has already been put to the Afghan Government as reported in paragraph 4 of your telegram No. 106 of the 24th September and which appears to have been quite favourably received.

3. In paragraphs 12-14 of your despatch you discuss the Afghan Government's dislike of the Government of India's alleged "forward policy" on the

Frontier, and in the first sentence of paragraph 14 you speak of the use of force as being "at any rate an integral part" of our policy. In this connexion I would refer to the statement of the Government of India's frontier policy which is contained in paragraphs 23-4 of the memorandum by His Excellency the Viceroy enclosed with the Government of India's despatch in the External Affairs Department No. 1 of the 22nd July, 1939, and which is based on the statements contained in my despatch No. 122 of the 8th September, 1937, and in my note of the 30th October, 1937, to the Afghan Minister in London. The Government of India's intention to pursue their policy by peaceful means wherever possible was fully explained in my despatch of September 1937, the substance of which was, as you will remember, communicated to the Afghan Government by Major Macann in his letter No. 514 of the 28th October, 1937, to the Afghan Minister for Foreign Affairs. I recognise that it may not be unnatural that the Afghan Government may at times entertain doubts as to the underlying motives of our policy in view of the protracted nature of the recent disturbances in Waziristan and the military operations which these have necessitated, but if this is the case, and if the Afghan Government appear still to harbour misapprehensions on the subject, you should take every useful opportunity of endeavouring to dispel them.

4. A copy of this despatch is being sent to the Government of India.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX.

[N 4093/941/97]

No. 36.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received May 14.)

(No. 108. Secret.)

(Telegraphic.)

Kabul, May 14, 1940.

REPEATED to External Affairs Department, Simla. Continuation of Katodon telegram No. 73 of 8th April.

2. Withdrawal from Norway has occasioned considerable setback in local opinion, which had been strengthening in favour of Allies. This is probably only temporary phase which will disappear if we are able to prevent Germany from occupying Low Countries.

3. Present feeling appears, however, to be retarding movement for closer approach to British Government.

[N 5424/82/97]

No. 37.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received May 26.)

(No. 119.)

(Telegraphic.)

Kabul, May 26, 1940.

MILITARY assistance to Afghan Government.

2. At close of interview on 23rd May, Foreign Minister said he wished to discuss proposals made by me to Prime Minister on 1st May (Katodon No. 99). There had been some delay in replying to His Majesty's Government's offer, but I would realise that events of past few weeks had not been without effect on Afghan Government and people. He was glad to say, however, that he had managed to convince King and senior members of Cabinet that only hope for Afghanistan was to stand firmly by their policy of friendship with and reliance on British people.

3. In more normal circumstances Afghan Government would have been glad to receive visit from Molesworth and to resume discussions on question of strategy, organisation, &c. At present, however, there are two difficulties in the way of such visit: (a) general feeling in Afghanistan which had been affected by recent events, and (b) risk of arousing Russian suspicion. Soviet Government were friendly and did not appear aggressive at present, but they were very suspicious. Also the recent arrival of coal survey party had given rise to report that the British were building fortifications in Northern Afghanistan.

4. In these circumstances the Afghan Government could not at present overtly concert plans for defence of Afghanistan with the British Government as they would like to do. But they did not wish to drop the matter, and suggested that if His Majesty's Government and the Government of India agreed, they should send officer of the General Staff to Simla to discuss plans with the Indian General Staff.

5. Officer they had in mind was Brigadier Muhammad Arif, who had been trained in Turkey and had subsequently represented Afghan General Staff in Germany, where he had been head of Afghan Purchasing Committee. He was thoroughly reliable and extremely anti-German. He would have full information and power to give Indian General Staff any information they require. He would require interpreter, and Foreign Minister suggested Lancaster as suitable. It might be possible after his visit to arrange for officers of Indian General Staff to come to Kabul to inspect northern areas, possibly in guise of coal or other exports.

6. I advise acceptance of this proposal, at any rate in principle. It may not take us very far, but it will make a start. Foreign Minister was very friendly, but attitude here among younger members of the Government is doubtful, and we should do what we can to strengthen our position with our friends. I fancy influence of Turkish Ambassador has had steadying effect among older men.

7. I am endeavouring to find out something more about Muhammad Arif. (Repeated to Foreign, Simla, Katodon, No. 115.)

[N 5386/34/97]

No. 38.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received June 1.)

(No. 32.)

My Lord,

Kabul, April 17, 1940.

I HAVE the honour to refer to my despatch No. 109, dated the 14th December, 1939, and to subsequent correspondence on the subject of the King's present to King Zahir Shah of a Rolls Royce motor car.

2. The car arrived in Peshawar in the middle of February, but, owing to heavy snow on the passes, had to remain there till the middle of March, when it was transported in its case to Kabul. It was unpacked and tested by the superintendent of the legation garage, who found that, except for some minor damage sustained on the journey, the machine was in perfect condition.

3. On behalf of His Majesty I presented the car to King Zahir Shah at an audience granted to me for the purpose at the Dilkusha Palace on the 15th April. The King was manifestly delighted with this very Royal gift, and asked that his renewed thanks should be conveyed to His Majesty for his kindness. He was taken by the garage superintendent for a short drive, and was shown the many "gadgets" which form part of this beautiful specimen of modern motor engineering. He was particularly pleased with a very ingenious device for altering the springing of the car while in motion, so as to make it ride easily over rough roads, a device whose value can only be fully appreciated by those who have travelled by road in Afghanistan. The car was then handed over to the King's driver with the suggestion that the assistance of this legation should be sought if adjustments were at any time required.

4. I hear, unofficially, that King Zahir Shah proposes to send His Majesty, as a return gift a present of two carpets of modern Afghan manufacture, on one of which is to be woven a map of Afghanistan and on the other a map of Britain. I do not know whether this project will ever in fact materialise, but if it does I feel that, though the carpets will be in all probability neither beautiful nor useful, they will be a unique present, and one which will be sensibly in keeping with the finances of this very impoverished Government.

5. I am sending a copy of this despatch to the Secretary of State for India and to the Government of India.

I have, &c.

W. K. FRASER-TYTLER.

[N 4093/941/97]

No. 39.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received June 1.)

(No. 35.)

My Lord,

Kabul, April 19, 1940.

WITH reference to my despatch No. 32, dated the 17th April, 1940, reporting the presentation of the Rolls Royce motor car to King Zahir Shah, I have the honour to inform your Lordship that after inspecting the car the King asked me to come into the palace to discuss current events with him.

2. He began by asking for information about the situation in Northern Europe, in which he was obviously much interested. Fortunately, I had received the night before your Lordship's telegram (No. 421, dated the 13th April), and so was able to give His Majesty a concise résumé of the actual position. I handed him a note giving British and German losses as shown in this telegram, to which I had added German losses at the second attack on Narvik, and the news of the torpedoing of the *Von Scheer*, which had been reported on the radio that morning.

3. It is not very easy to cause an Afghan to understand the effect of sea power, but the comparative numbers of losses were very significant, and His Majesty seemed considerably impressed by them. He told me that at present his main source of day-to-day information was the German broadcast in Persian from Berlin, which gave him a very different picture of the Norwegian affair from what I had just told him. I agreed that this probably was the case, and reminded him of German reports of the incident of the *Graf Spee*, as illustrating the complete unreliability of wireless news from Berlin. We discussed the situation, and I remarked that even to a layman the attempt by a country which has not got control of the sea to invade a country by sea seemed both illogical and unreasonable. His Majesty interjected that it was no good referring either to logic or reason when discussing what the German Government might or might not do. He hoped that we would succeed in turning their forces out of Norway before very long.

4. His attitude is, I think, typical of the great majority of Afghans, but German propaganda, though often very crude, is widespread in Afghanistan and forcible. I am countering it in a number of ways, some of them in conjunction with my French colleague, but it is not easy to convey the truth in a country in which so many of the inhabitants are as illiterate as they are credulous, where the press is small, Government-controlled and painfully neutral, and in which the Germans have so great an advantage in point of numbers. A really good Persian broadcast, at a suitable time, from Delhi would be of much assistance, and I am hoping that the Government of India will be able before long to improve their present service. I am also proposing to discuss shortly with the Prime Minister the whole question of propaganda in this country, from the point of view that the Germans are being allowed at present too much liberty of action.

5. I am sending a copy of this despatch to the Secretary of State for India and to the Government of India.

I have, &c.

W. K. FRASER-TYTLER.

[N 1612/26/97]

No. 40.

Unofficial Quarterly Letter from His Majesty's Minister, Kabul.—(Received June 3.)

(Confidential.)

THERE have been no developments of any importance in the internal or external affairs of Afghanistan during the past three months. This is, of course, quite normal; January and February are the two coldest months in the country, the majority of the population either leave the higher lands for a warmer climate or "go to ground" in their houses, and nearly all activity ceases. This year the winter has been short, there was heavy snow at the end of January and in early February, but by the end of that month it had practically disappeared save on the high ranges. There was enough, however, to ensure good crops provided the spring rains are up to average. The Persian lamb market in America has been

booming, and nearly all last year's crop has been sold. Cotton has been fetching high prices and the prospects of the fruit season are good. Against this, rising prices due to war conditions have affected imports, and the dislocation of trade with Germany has caused some loss to Afghanistan as to most other neutral countries. On the whole, however, the country is as prosperous as it ever has been, and the gradual development of its resources holds out hope for better times ahead.

It is as yet impossible to say whether the plans for this development will, in fact, be successful, but it is possible to see the direction in which the Government is moving and to speculate whether their economic programme is designed on the right lines.

Up to 1919, the economic system of Afghanistan had few complications. She was a country without internal debt and with practically no commitments abroad. Life was a simple affair, the country, with an area one and a quarter times as large as France and a population of probably not more than 10 million was self-contained in most essentials, and such imports as were required were paid for by exports of fruit and wool, or from the yearly subsidy paid by the Government of India.

The situation altered materially when the Afghan Government obtained their independence in 1919. The establishment of foreign missions in Kabul and the arrival of expert engineers and other employees of the Afghan Government from foreign countries, coupled with increasing opportunities for Afghans to visit or study in Europe caused a tendency to raise the standard of living. This involved an increase in imports from abroad, while remittances abroad from foreign employees increased the drain on the country's resources. To this must be added the extravagance and wasteful expenditure caused by Ammanullah's grandiose schemes of town planning and other developments, the majority of which were ill-conceived and worse executed.

To meet this increased expenditure and to compensate for the loss of the British subsidy, a planned development of exportable goods was required, but little or nothing was done. The result was lamentable. By 1924 the country's finances were in such a state that, to give an example, the Government were hard put to it to find sufficient foreign exchange to pay for two aeroplanes purchased from the British Government, and offered to meet the cost by payment in hides and skins! When the revolution came in 1928 bankruptcy was not far off.

Nadir Shah profited in this as in other matters from mistakes of his predecessors. For the first year or two the political situation was too precarious to permit of anything in the nature of economic planning and the Afghan Government were forced to subsist on such income as they could derive from customs receipts and the sale of Karakul and fruit. It was a hand to mouth existence, and although a good deal was done to improve revenue returns by tightening up customs administration and by the prevention of smuggling, it was clear to a man of Nadir Shah's administrative capacity that real progress was impossible unless measures could be taken to develop the country's resources. By about 1933 the Government found themselves in a sufficiently stable position to turn their attention to this vital subject. They found in a young Herat trader of Pathan ancestry, M. Abdul Majid, an energetic and resourceful economist, and by the beginning of 1935 they were able to embark on their somewhat hazardous voyage towards economic self-sufficiency.

Their plans were based on two main considerations. The first of these was to put trade into the hands of Afghan subjects, who up to then had been exploited by the Turkestan Jew in the north, and the Hindu bania in the south, and to ensure reasonable prices for imports and exports. With this object they formed a series of monopoly companies, such as those dealing in Karakul, petrol and fruit, and forbade the sale or purchase of goods covered by monopolies save through these companies, who regulated prices in accordance with those prevailing in the world markets.

The idea was a good one in theory, but in practice it showed several defects. External trade with Russia was not, as a matter of fact, much affected, since State trading by Afghanistan had its counterpart across the Oxus. Traders in Northern India were, however, severely affected, and in some cases ruined, since the policy of the monopoly companies was to deal, if possible, with the producer or consumer direct, and to transfer the profits of the Indian middleman to the pockets of the Afghan shareholder. Internally the establishment of the monopoly system gave rise to much discontent. The individual trader

found himself unable to function save as a shareholder in, or a client of, the companies, and as much of the trade was in the hands of Indians who were debarred by nationality from holding such shares their retail trade in monopoly goods vanished. The whole policy of the monopoly system was, in fact, designed to squeeze out the foreign trader in Afghanistan, and although it was not directed specifically against Indians, the Indian traders were by far the hardest hit. They retaliated by boycotting the fruit trade, one of the principal Afghan exports. The boycott came at a time when Afghanistan was sorely in need of foreign exchange to meet commitments in Europe, and the Afghan Government had to give way. A number of monopolies were abolished, and the only ones now remaining are in respect of cotton, motor cars, petrol, Karakul and sugar. But the monopoly system was not without its value, in that it gave a certain cohesion to Afghan trade, and taught the Afghan trader something about international economy, and world markets and prices. The main defect of the system, which still persists in the remaining monopoly companies, is the tendency to place control in the hands of a few of the principal shareholders who make large profits which should by right be shared with the producer and retailer.

The second consideration affecting the Government's economic policy was the necessity to balance trade exchanges, and by developing such resources as could be found in the country, to become as self sufficient as possible in certain main articles of consumption, thereby conserving foreign exchange for the purchase of the many technical and scientific articles which the country could not produce. Now the principal Afghan imports, apart from munitions of war, are textiles, sugar and petrol. A survey of the potential resources of the country showed that in the north round Khanabad, large areas were available and suitable for the cultivation of cotton, and that wool of good quality was produced in South-Eastern Afghanistan, particularly round Kandahar. A little south of Khanabad, an area, round Baglan, was found to be particularly adapted for the cultivation of sugar beet, and there were traces of oil near Herat and Maimana. And so the plan was made. Textile machinery, factories for the extraction of oil, and the manufacture of soap from cotton seed, and sugar factories were bought on credit from Europe and are now in process of erection. The cultivation of cotton was undertaken with the help first of German and Russian and now of British experts. The wool factory in Kandahar and the textile factories at Pul-i-Khumri and Jabal Siraj were placed in the hands of Germans, and experts from Czecho-Slovakia undertook the cultivation of beet. The majority of the factories are not yet completed, though textiles are already being produced in Jabal Siraj, and, in the meantime, the growing output of cotton and wool is available for export abroad. The cotton crop last year was about 10,000 tons, and is expected to reach 25,000 tons in the next five years, and wool available for export amounted to 10,000 tons. This is no great quantity, when compared with the output of other countries, but it represents a considerable sum of money to a country like Afghanistan.

As regards oil, failure must so far be recorded. An American company obtained an exploring concession in 1936 and spent two years and half-a-million dollars in a preliminary survey. Traces of oil were found in sufficient quantities to warrant further investigation, and prospects seemed good when in 1938 the company suddenly closed down. The concession which included besides Afghanistan a considerable area in Eastern Iran, as well as a £15 million contract for a pipe-line to the coast of the Persian Gulf, was too costly, and the American principals would not risk, in face of world conditions, so vast an outlay in so remote an area. It is possible, however, that in the next few years some further attempt may be made on a smaller scale to exploit the Afghan oil-fields.

The above is a brief outline of the main plan of Afghan economic development. It is too early yet to say whether it will succeed, or whether even this small attempt at industrialisation may not prove beyond the capacity of Afghan organisation and technical skill. Critics of the scheme are inclined to point to the fact that industrialisation requires a higher standard of education and civilisation than is possessed by the average Afghan, and that highly technical machinery does not as a rule last long in the hands of tribesmen and peasantry. They point to the derelict factories to be seen in Kabul, bearing unhappy witness to previous failures in industrial effort, and suggest that the Afghan authorities would have been well advised to develop the production of raw material, with which to pay for their requirements from abroad, and place in the forefront of their programme the study and improvement of their agricultural resources. For

Afghanistan is essentially a country for farmers. The cultivated areas are small, but fruit is already one of the main exports, and fruit culture would well repay intensive study. Above all, Afghanistan is a pastoral country peculiarly fitted for animal breeding. There are thousands of square miles of seasonal grazing, the climate is excellent, and there are already in the country breeds of horses, sheep, cattle and poultry of excellent quality. The improvement of wool, and of the milk yield, selective breeding of the fine Turkoman horse, and research into questions affecting the already famous Persian lamb industry would be of much value. Some action has already been taken to reclaim wastelands in the north and to construct irrigation dams and canals in various parts of the country, and it is probable that before long endeavour will be made to tackle the many problems which confront the Afghan farmer. But at the time of writing there are only two inefficient experimental farms in the country, and the study of animal husbandry and veterinary sciences is virtually non-existent. One cannot help feeling that it is along these lines, rather than in attempts at mechanised industry, that the true prosperity of the country lies.

Before leaving this subject, there are two matters affecting economic development which are worth mention. The first is the question of the Afghan roads. The Afghan Government are well aware that good roads, or, alternatively, railways, are an essential part of an economic scheme. The question of railways is difficult, and although we may see before long a line of railway running between Kandahar and Chaman, the cost of construction, even over such easy ground as Southern Afghanistan, is so high that it will be many years before railways will penetrate far enough into the country to relieve the roads of the main burden of transport. Meanwhile, the main arterial roads are in urgent need of repair, reconstruction and in many places of realignment. Here, again, the high cost of constructing and maintaining roads in a condition to carry fast-moving traffic has deterred the Afghan Government from embarking on a road-building programme, in spite of the fact that it is rarely possible to maintain an average of over 20 miles an hour on a journey under the most favourable conditions, and in winter all the main roads are at times impassable. The Afghan Government have made several endeavours without much success to improve matters, but seem inclined now to leave the question till it can be taken up, with foreign assistance, on a large scale, rather than to go on tinkering at road construction with the assistance of a few rather indifferent German engineers.

The other question is that of fuel. For the last thousand years or so the only fuel in the country has been wood, and the result can be seen in the barren hills which form so large a part of the Afghan scenery. (Whether all the hills were at one time covered with forests is a matter for speculation, but the fact that forests do still exist in remote areas like Nuristan and Khost suggests that the country was at one time much more thickly wooded than it is to-day.) Whatever may have been the position in former times, the fact remains that, as the country has developed, so fuel has been increasingly difficult to obtain till in the last twelve months we, in this legation, have found it, on the whole, more economical and less trouble to import coal from India at the high figure of 60 rupees (about £4 10s.) a ton. The Afghans are naturally unwilling to increase the drain on their foreign exchange by following our example, but if the people are not to perish of cold and their industrial programme is ever to be carried through, fuel of some sort must be found to supplement, in places where water-power is not readily available, their hydro-electric schemes.

Fortunately coal has been found, though, as usually happens with discoveries of this nature in Afghanistan, in a most inaccessible place. Some fifty years ago a geologist called Greisbach left it on record that he had discovered a great coal deposit in the heart of the Hindu Kush, at a place called Shisha Walang, some 200 miles north of Kabul and at no great distance from the main north road. This report remained unnoticed till 1936, when Dr. Fox, now head of the Geological Survey of India, visited Afghanistan to report on certain coal deposits near Kabul. These he found to be of little or no value, but after examining them he obtained permission to visit northern Afghanistan, and had the satisfaction of rediscovering Greisbach's find and of confirming his estimate of 50 million tons in this particular area, with a strong possibility that other coal deposits might be found further to the north-east in possibly less inaccessible places. It has taken some time for the Afghan Government to decide on the next step, but a geological survey party from India has in the past week proceeded

from Kabul to the coal-bearing areas with the object of making a detailed survey and of finding the most suitable locality in which to work the coal. It will be a costly and difficult business to bring it down to Kabul, but the deposits are fortunately placed so far as the new industrial areas are concerned.

This brief survey shows the main lines on which Afghan economic development is moving. In describing it, I have not touched on the minor industries of the country, such as the export of hides and skins, or of opium, the manufacture of carpets, or the development of a trade in lapis-lazuli and other semi-precious stones. Nor have I speculated on the possibility that in the vast unknown areas of the Hindu Kush, large deposits of other minerals may be found, a possibility which is I am told somewhat remote, though not impossible. Generally speaking the economic plan appears to hold out a fair prospect of increasing the prosperity of the country, and in time producing economic stability. But success in this direction requires political stability, and it is not yet possible to say of Afghanistan that such stability has been reached as to ensure the peaceful conditions requisite for an era of economic progress.

W. K. FRASER-TYTTLER.

Kabul, April 1, 1940.

[N 5424/82/97]

No. 41.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received June 15.)

(No. 140.)

(Telegraphic.)

Kabul, June 15, 1940.

FORMINKA telegram No. 118: Afghan policy.

2. On 10th June I opened discussions with Foreign Minister, and on 13th June had full discussion with Prime, Foreign and Commerce Ministers. Interview though affected by [? obscurity of] present situation was very friendly. Prime Minister began by statement that attitude of Afghan Government had in no way altered towards His Majesty's Government, and that they were determined to pursue their policy of close friendship with British Government through days bad and good. He then went on to details of the proposals.

3. As regards gift of arms King and Government were very grateful for [corrupt group] made at such a [? time]. Had it been [corrupt group] arrangements to supply armaments on scale commensurate with Afghan needs they would have gladly accepted it. I had, however, informed Foreign Minister that no further supply of armaments was at present possible, and Afghan Government fully realised position. In these circumstances they would prefer not to accept gift [? at present], but to await time when their major requirements could be fulfilled. He feared that evident inability of His Majesty's Government to assist them to any real extent which would be afforded by acceptance of so small consignment would not fail to create bad impression here.

4. As regards visit of Arif, Afghan Government would be guided by wishes of Government of India. They were quite ready to send him, but in view of fact that supply of armaments was no longer in question, Prime Minister was doubtful whether visit would serve useful purpose. Moreover, if he went to Simla and returned without having achieved anything concrete, he might receive bad impression of the state of India's defences and of their ability or willingness to help Afghan Government. Military authorities in Kabul were prepared to answer any questions, and in regard to such matters as construction of roads, Prime Minister was in far better position to advise than Arif. He would be guided by wishes of Government of India after they had considered these points.

5. We then turned to commercial questions, for which see my immediately succeeding telegram.

(Repeated Foreign, Simla.)

[N 5424/82/97]

No. 42.

Government of India, External Affairs Department, to Secretary of State for India.—(Communicated by India Office; Received June 22.)

(No. 2155.)

(Telegraphic.)

Simla, June 22, 1940.

ADDRESSED to Secretary of State for India, repeated to Kabul, No. 290. Reference Katodon, No. 140 of 15th June. Afghan policy. It is convenient to us not to have to supply armaments proposed. We are also relieved that Afghan Government are no longer anxious that Arif should visit India, and agree that this visit should not take place at any rate for the time being. We are ready to fall in with Prime Minister's suggestion that such matters as construction of roads should be discussed with him by (? His Majesty's Minister).

2. Our general view is that our present policy should be to assist Afghan Government as much as we can commercially and economically, and that in return we should expect them to do their utmost to control activities of foreigners in Afghanistan and to co-operate in keeping their frontier quiet.

[N 5881/2160/97]

No. 43.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received June 24.)

(No. 152. Secret.)

(Telegraphic.)

Kabul, June 24, 1940.

2. I have received reliable though unconfirmed report that trade agreement was signed on 20th June between Afghan and Soviet Governments for following trade exchanges :—

- (a) Exports from Russia : petrol, diesel oil, kerosine oil, and sugar.
- (b) Exports from Afghanistan : cotton and wool.

3. This agreement is probably outcome of our inability to purchase cotton and wool. It will, I fear, lead to increase in Soviet influence here, where they at present appear to be receiving German and Italian backing. Agreement is being kept very secret at present.

4. I will endeavour to verify report as soon as possible. Being a barter agreement it will presumably not affect present foreign exchange crisis to any marked extent, nor is it likely cotton now in India will be sent back for export to Russia. *Ends.*

[N 5881/2160/97]

No. 44.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received June 27.)

(No. 155.)

(Telegraphic.)

Kabul, June 26, 1940.

SOVIET-AFGHAN Trade Agreement.

2. Foreign Minister informs me that agreement is ready for signature, but has not yet been signed. According to him it is merely renewal of agreement between Afghan National Bank and Sovantorog, which lapsed last year.

3. Soviet Government had renewed their endeavours to turn [? agreement] into one between two Governments [corrupt group] with certain concessions similar to those granted by Iran. Afghan Government had managed so far to resist this proposal.

4. Foreign Minister stated emphatically that there were no political concessions contained in present proposals, and promised to inform me at once should any such proposals be put forward [? now].

(Repeated to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Katodon, No. 152.)

[N 5424/82/97]

No. 45.

Viscount Halifax to Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler (Kabul).

(No. 141. Secret.)

(Telegraphic.)

Foreign Office, July 2, 1940.

KATODON, No. 140, and Government of India's telegram No. 2155/290 of the 22nd June: Afghan policy.

2. It seems desirable to avoid giving Afghan Government any excuse for saying subsequently that His Majesty's Government rejected their proposal to send Arif to India. In addressing them further on the matter you should, therefore, remind them that His Majesty's Government attach importance to the continuance at a suitable opportunity of military conversations in order that they may concert plans in advance with the Afghan Government to enable them to carry out their guarantee of assistance in the case of Russian aggression. If, however, they feel that in present circumstances the visit of Arif to India is not likely to lead to profitable results, His Majesty's Government do not desire to press the proposal at the present time. As regards to such matters as construction of roads, they will be pleased to accept the Prime Minister's offer to advise.

[N 5881/2160/97]

No. 46.

Sir S. Cripps to Viscount Halifax.—(Received July 6.)

(No. 416.)

(Telegraphic.)

Moscow, July 4, 1940.

AFGHAN Ambassador told me to-day that, although Afghan-Soviet trade negotiations were completed some time ago, trade agreement has yet to be signed.

2. He denied that any political pressure had been, or was being, brought to bear on Afghanistan by the Soviet Government.

3. Only outstanding question according to the ambassador is that of the frontier on Oxus. This is just now being discussed at Kabul but without much success. Russians apparently claim sovereignty up to further bank, while the Afghans assert that the frontier should follow Median.

4. His Excellency added that his Government had no cause for nervousness apart from the failure of the Soviet Government to sign the trade agreement.

(Repeated to Kabul.)

[N 5881/2160/97]

No. 47.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received July 27.)

(No. 193. Secret.)

(Telegraphic.)

Kabul, July 27, 1940.

SOVIET-AFGHAN Agreement.

2. Agreement has been signed and text will be [? published] shortly. Foreign Minister described it as in paragraph No. 2 and paragraph No. 4 of above telegram.

(Repeated to Foreign, Simla.)

[N 6098/34/97]

No. 48.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received August 2.)

(No. 54.)

My Lord,

Kabul, June 28, 1940.

IN the course of a recent interview the Foreign Minister asked leave to put before me certain views of the Afghan Government on the question of a possible change in the status of India in its relations to the British Empire and to the world generally. He said that the reason for bringing this matter up at the

present time was that the Afghan Government had received or read certain reports in the newspapers and from elsewhere which suggested that, in the hope of ensuring the co-operation of all classes of Indians in the present struggle, His Majesty's Government might be disposed to offer Dominion status or its equivalent to India, as the price of such assistance. I replied that I had no reason to suppose that His Majesty's Government had any such idea in their mind, at the present moment. The difficulties in the way of granting Dominion status or genuine self-government to India were immense, and so long as the great political parties in India did not agree among themselves, it seemed most unlikely that we should make an offer which would at present be almost impossible to implement.

2. The Foreign Minister said he hoped that this was the case, but in times of stress strange things were done, and sufficient regard was not always paid to their consequences. He would mention the Balfour Declaration of 1917 in regard to Palestine, as an instance of what he meant. In the present case, he wished to draw the attention of His Majesty's Government to the very great risk which would at present attend any pronouncement about a change in India's political status. He reminded me that the British and Afghan Governments had an understanding which provided for mutual consultation in any case affecting the interests of both countries. The grant of anything in the nature of Dominion status to India would have a profound effect not only on the attitude of Afghanistan towards her future relations with a Dominion Government of India, but also on the whole balance of power in Central Asia. He and his Government therefore expected that they would be consulted before any such change took place, or at any rate would be informed in sufficient time to enable them to consider fully the implications of the proposals and if necessary make representations about them.

3. I repeated that I did not think there was any likelihood at present of such a change in the status of India, but I would, of course, pass on his Excellency's representations to my Government. At the same time, it would be of interest to me and no doubt to His Majesty's Government and the Government of India to be told rather more fully what would be the reactions of the Afghan Government to such a change. The only parallel case I could think of in the British Commonwealth was that of the Dominion of Canada and the United States of America. The Governments of these two countries seemed to get on very well together, and the relationship between the two peoples was somewhat the same as that between the Afghans and the Mahometans of Northern India. Did his Excellency wish to convey a hint that, in the case of Afghanistan and the Dominion of India, the two peoples would not be able to get on together?

4. The Foreign Minister said he would state the case briefly as his Government viewed it. There was, in the first place, the very vital question of the balance of power. So far that balance had been maintained as between Russia, India and Afghanistan by the fact that India was under British control, and Britain was responsible for India's foreign policy. As a Dominion India would be responsible for her own foreign policy; she might take up the same attitude as Eire had done and practically sever her connexion with the Commonwealth. He did not say that she would do so, but the fact that she had the power to do so would make a fundamental change in the whole situation in Asia. The Afghan Government's relations were at present with the British Government; he was not at all certain that they would feel themselves able to continue these same relations with a Dominion Government of India. They had had a connexion with the British in India of many years' standing. This connexion was now based on mutual understanding and respect and the Afghan Government had learnt to look to His Majesty's Government for support in their dealings with their great northern neighbour. Would it be possible for them to look for similar support to a Dominion Government of India? He doubted it.

5. I said I thought his Excellency was taking a rather pessimistic point of view. Our discussion was, of course, based on a successful outcome of the present struggle. If we were successful—and I had no doubt myself that we would be in the end—the political development of India was bound to continue in the direction of Dominion status, but I felt quite sure that any such development would be safeguarded in such a way as to maintain the present balance in Asia, and the interests of the States on the Indian borders. If this was the case, the Afghan Government would, I felt sure, be able to adjust themselves to the new conditions and live in harmony with their neighbours.

6. The Foreign Minister said he feared this would be very difficult. There were many thorny problems, such as the question of the great Mahometan minority and the certainty that the ruling power would pass into the hands of the Hindus, with whom the Afghans, and particularly the younger generation, could never maintain good relations for long. There was also the question of the tribes. He could assure me that so long as British control continued in India, the Afghan Government and people would be content to abide by their treaty obligations to His Majesty's Government and to assist to the best of their power in the common task of civilising and controlling the tribal areas. They had no desire whatever to add to their burdens in this respect, nor was there any irredentist feeling at present in the country. But neither the Government nor the people of Afghanistan would view with indifference the assumption by a Dominion Government, composed mainly of Hindus, of control of the Pathan tribes of the North-West Frontier. Some settlement of this important question would be required if the relations between the two Governments were even to start harmoniously. Lastly, there was the fact that Afghanistan was a land-locked State, and was dependent on the goodwill of India to maintain her trade with foreign countries. So long as power was in the hands of the British, they were content with their present position, but the question of direct access to the sea would become very prominent should control of India's ports pass into Indian hands. These were matters of grave importance, and he much hoped that, although the question of a change in India's status was, he recognised, a matter primarily of internal policy, the Government of Afghanistan would be consulted and have an opportunity to make such representations as they might deem necessary before any such change was announced.

7. I thanked the Foreign Minister for his frank statement and said I would convey the substance of it to His Majesty's Government and the Government of India. This, of course, is by no means the first time that the Afghan Government have made representations on this question, which is indeed for them a matter of vital importance. In a recent despatch, paragraphs 9 and 10 of Kabul despatch No. 3 of the 10th January, 1940, I offered some remarks on this point, and I notice that the Government of India have taken note of the apprehensions likely to be aroused in the minds of the rulers of adjacent States by the advance of India towards Dominion status (see paragraph 8 of the letter from the secretary in the External Affairs Department to the Under-Secretary of State for India, No. 390-F/40, dated the 13th February, 1940).

8. I have, however, thought it advisable to convey the substance of this conversation to your Lordship, chiefly because it is, I think, the first time that an Afghan Minister has made so definite a statement on this subject. The tenour of the Foreign Minister's remarks suggested to me that he wished to convey to His Majesty's Government a warning that any pronouncement about Dominion status made at such a critical time would have a very unfortunate effect on the present policy of this country. He also wished to convey the hint that if the question did come up at a more favourable time there would be little hope of a continuance of the present good relations between the Government of India and the Afghan Government unless any such change was accompanied by safeguards for the maintenance of the balance of power in Central Asia, by a settlement of the tribal question, and by some arrangement whereby the Afghan Government could ensure the continuance of their overseas trade by assuring them of free access to the sea. These last points are interesting. I foretold last year that, in the event of war, one of the main directions of enemy propaganda would be to offer the Afghan Government the northern provinces of India, including the port of Karachi, in the event of victory by the Axis Powers. This propaganda is current in Kabul now, and is not without its influence, particularly on the younger Afghans.

9. I am sending a copy of this despatch to the Secretary of State for India and to the Government of India.

I have, &c.

W. K. FRASER-TYTLER.

[N 5887/2160/97]

No. 49.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received August 6.)

(No. 202.)

(Telegraphic.)

Kabul, August 5, 1940.

ADDRESSED to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Continuation of Katodon telegram No. 189 of 22nd July.

2. Signing of Trade Agreement between Russia and Afghanistan has had good effect on public opinion and fear of Russian invasion has diminished.

3. German propaganda continues with full force, but rather less effect. Continued delay in large-scale attack on Britain is restor[?]ing [?] confidence] in British ability and determination to resist, and eventually to overcome, Germany.

4. Italian stock is very [?] low].

[N 6098/34/97]

No. 50.

Government of India, External Affairs Department, to Secretary of State for India.—(Communicated by India Office; Received August 7.)

(No. 464-S.C.)

(Telegraphic.)

Viceroy's Camp, Ganeshkhind, August 7, 1940.

ADDRESSED to Secretary of State for India; repeated to Kabul.

As result of decision that statement on constitutional issue is to be made by Viceroy on [?] 8th August], we have to consider what line Fraser-Tytler should take with the Afghans. Position as we see it is as follows :—

- (a) We cannot admit the right of Afghan Government to expect or receive any preliminary warning, or to be consulted about constitutional arrangements affecting India.
- (b) Subject to this, we are, of course, anxious to remove any apprehensions which they may reasonably feel as to possible effect of change of policy on our part on future relations between Afghanistan and His Majesty's Government.

2. We suggest, in these circumstances, that nothing should be said by Fraser-Tytler to the Afghans until after statement has appeared. Line which we suggest he should take thereafter is as follows :—

- (a) Statement repeats that objective of His Majesty's Government for India is, as has already been made clear on numerous occasions over last twenty-three years, and more particularly in the last [?] twelve months], Dominion status, *i.e.*, India would remain a member [?] of the] British Commonwealth of Nations, in [?], we hope, the same friendly relations with Afghanistan as remaining members of the Commonwealth.
- (b) As statement [?] clearly] indicates, no immediate action (beyond expansion of Governor-General's Executive Council and establishment of a War Advisory Council) is involved; what is in view is a closer association of India with prosecution of war and a reassurance as to attitude of His Majesty's Government towards arrangements to be made on conclusion of war for [?] devising of] details of future constitutional arrangements.
- (c) As statement brings out in last two paragraphs, His Majesty's Government have emphasised their concern for minorities [?], to the coercion of which they could not subscribe, and their determination to ensure the due fulfilment of obligations which Great Britain's long connexion with India has imposed upon her and for which His Majesty's Government cannot divest themselves of responsibility.

3. We think this should satisfy any reasonable Afghan qualms, and, if you agree, Fraser-Tytler might be so instructed. If Afghans revert to their interest in tribes or their dependence on India for trade, he should refer them to safe-

guards comprised in (b) and (c) above, more particularly with regard to minorities and to His Majesty's Government's continued responsibility for discharge of obligations [? entered into] before constitutional development had proceeded to present stage. He might further be instructed to react [? firmly] if they pursue the matter on the lines of current enemy propaganda, *e.g.*, Parkistan or control of port of Karachi.

4. Fraser-Tytler may also at his discretion make play with the fact in the light of recent correspondence between the Foreign Office, India Office, Government of India and himself that Afghans are well aware of concern of His Majesty's Government and Government of India to maintain their stability during this anxious period and of the steps we have had in view to that end.

5. We think it important Fraser-Tytler should be briefed in time to enable him to take [? matter] up as soon as substance of statement becomes known in Kabul.

[N 6098/34/97]

No. 51.

Viscount Halifax to Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler (Kabul).

(No. 186. Secret.)

(Telegraphic.)

Foreign Office, August 7, 1940.

GOVERNMENT of India's telegram No. 464-S.C.

Viceroy's statement. After statement has appeared, you should discuss matter with Afghan Government on lines proposed. You should, however, be cautious in regard to offering any precise explanations of the reservation relating to "due fulfilment of obligations," &c., and its connexion with such matters as Afghan trade arrangements with India.

(Repeated to Government of India, External Affairs Department.)

[N 1612/26/97]

No. 52.

Unofficial Quarterly Letter from His Majesty's Minister, Kabul.—(Received September 10.)

(Confidential.)

Kabul, July 1, 1940.

THIS letter deals with the reactions in Afghanistan to the events in Europe of the past three months.

At the beginning of April there were signs of an increase in German propaganda, and an infiltration of German agents, in the guise of engineers and other experts, was taking place. Herr Schnell, one of Germany's leading road experts, arrived in Kabul towards the end of March and appeared to be negotiating with the Afghan Government for the development of the road system in Northern Afghanistan, probably with a view to facilitating the passage of goods from Germany conveyed through Russia. This influx of Germans gave rise to many rumours of an impending attempt at a *coup d'Etat* with the object of establishing in Kabul a Government which would favour German interests and would, at any rate, act in such a manner with the tribes as to give us as much trouble as possible and tie up troops in India. But, in order to have any chance of success, such a *coup* would require something more than merely an attempt by a couple of hundred Germans or so to raise a rebellion in Afghanistan against the present Government by means of a number of disgruntled army officers and civilians, who had been suborned by German propaganda. A figure-head would be necessary and could only be supplied by the introduction into Afghanistan of either Amanullah himself or a member of his party. This, again, requires the connivance, if not the support, of the Russians, since the only avenue of approach was through Soviet territory.

As the situation in Europe developed in Germany's favour, during the months of May and June, so did conditions in Kabul become more unstable and difficult to estimate. The Afghan Government were, in fact, in a very awkward

position. Rumour and report were rife that the Germans were taking every opportunity to impress on the unstable Afghan mind the invincibility of their forces and the value of their friendship, and it seemed at one time that there was going to be a definite change of policy by the Afghan authorities, who were inclined to regard the Allied cause as hopeless. It seems probable that the Prime Minister did, in fact, hesitate for a time. Although a man of great force of character and a shrewd statesman, he is highly strung and excitable, and is inclined to be hasty in his judgments. He is an admirer of Britain and has striven hard during the last ten years for a closer rapprochement with the British Government, and for some concrete measures of assistance in the improvement of the forces of Afghanistan. When he realised that these could not at present be forthcoming, save in a very small measure, and in any case too late to turn the Afghan army into anything approaching an adequate fighting force, he was inclined to despair of our help or of the value of a continued policy of friendship towards Britain.

Fortunately, wiser counsels prevailed, and much is due to the sober advice given to the Prime Minister by men such as the Turkish Ambassador and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ali Muhammad. Their arguments, which eventually prevailed with the King, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, were something as follows. The only hope for Afghanistan is a victory for the Allies. If the Germans win, the British Empire will be broken up and there will be a fight over the carcase. No one knows who will get India, but probably there will be a quarrel over it between Russia, Germany and perhaps Japan. In any of these cases, Afghanistan is doomed. The Germans may at present offer the bribe of Northern India, including the port of Karachi, as the price of Afghan assistance in stirring up the frontier against India and so tying up the Indian Army to guard its home frontiers, but Hitler's promises are not worth the paper they are written on. A rapprochement with Russia would lead to Soviet infiltration, and to the eventual Sovietisation of the country. Japan, heavily involved in China, can offer little or nothing. If the British Empire goes, Afghanistan goes with it, and so, the only course for the Afghanistan is to maintain our policy of friendship for Britain, even though this friendship may be of no great value at present, in the hope that the tide of battle may turn, and that Hitler may find that the conquest of the British Empire is too heavy an undertaking even for his powers. Meanwhile, as Britain can give us little or nothing in the way of arms, let us see if we cannot squeeze something out of her in other directions, at the same time, we will keep on as friendly terms as possible with Russia, and do all we can to watch and restrain German agents in the country.

This, then, is the present policy of the Government, and so far as this Government goes it seems likely to continue to the end. But this Government might be overthrown, and probably would be, if the Germans and Italians could engineer the *coup d'État*, to which I have referred above. Constant representations have impressed on the Afghan authorities the danger of the Fifth Column, and the necessity for keeping the closest possible watch on the movements and contacts of all foreigners within their boundaries. They have done something to guard themselves, but they are astoundingly inefficient and *laissez-faire*. Apart from Kabul, there are a number of Germans working in Pul-i-Khumri, and in other parts of the country, notably in Kandahar. How far these are able to influence public opinion it is difficult to say, but they spare no efforts to do so, and are efficiently supported by the admirable broadcast in Persian from Berlin, to which, strangely enough, we have as yet found no adequate reply. Our Pushtu broadcast is good and is of considerable use in the frontier areas, but our attempts at Persian broadcasting have hitherto been a failure.

But the main question is the attitude of Russia. As I have said, without Russian support, the Germans are not likely to effect much, and the question is whether the Russians are so much "in" with the Germans as to be likely to help them to bring about by force a change in Afghan policy. By all laws of logic, the answer should be in the negative. Thieves do not as a rule trust each other very far, and one would expect that Stalin was far too occupied with his own future in Eastern Europe to have much time for adventures which, at best, must be looked on as hazardous, in this remote corner of his Empire. Nor does it seem likely that he would wish to see an extension of German influence along his Southern borders, till it touched the Western frontiers of Chinese Turkestan. But, as the Turkish Ambassador recently remarked, it is no good talking in terms

of logic, when dealing with dictators. They may do anything, at any time, even so dangerous a thing as the dispersal of Soviet forces, which would be required for a descent on India through Afghanistan. All that one can say is that at present there are no signs of preparations for such an undertaking. Unless the Soviet Government have such an undertaking in mind, they are not likely to support, to any great extent, if at all, German efforts designed to upset the present régime and so to acquire considerable influence with any succeeding Government.

At present, all eyes are turned to Europe, and to the impending attempt of Germany to overthrow the British Empire. Should this attempt fail, the effect in Afghanistan as elsewhere will be very great. What form it will take it is difficult to say, but there will certainly be a revival of courage here as elsewhere, and the rising tide of German influence and prestige will be stayed, though not perhaps definitely turned.

Before closing this necessarily brief letter, it might be as well to say something about Turkey. Turkey's inability to enter the war against Italy, though understandable enough to the instructed few, has had some effect on general Afghan opinion. But so long as Turkey does not repudiate her engagements to Britain, the effect of her present passive attitude is not very marked. The Turks themselves, in Kabul, appear apprehensive of the outcome of the present forward movement of Russia into the Balkans, but their general attitude has been and remains very satisfactory. Outside Kabul, where Russian and German influence has not penetrated very far, there remains a strong anti-Russian feeling, and considerable sympathy for the British cause. Only the other day, an Afghan friend, of humble origin, informed me that he had been obliged to fight, and down, a butcher who had dared to state that the King and Government of Britain had fled the country.

W. K. FRASER-TYTLER.

[N 6578/941/97]

No. 53.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received September 13.)

(No. 243. Secret.)
(Telegraphic.)

Kabul, September 10, 1940.

CONTINUATION of my telegram No. 202 of 5th August.

2. Success of [? R.A.F.] [two corrupt groups] raids on Berlin and Italy carried out at such distance from our bases has had good effect on public opinion, which appears to be veering slowly but steadily towards belief in ultimate British victory. This has been further reinforced by the recent news of American and British agreement over destroyers and defensive bases in [? Western] Hemisphere. There is speculation in some circles as to possible revolution in Germany itself or in German-occupied territories.

3. German propaganda, however, continues very strong, and has recently been increased by visit to Kabul of Afghan Minister in Berlin, who is strongly pro-Nazi. I do not think this propaganda appeals to more than small proportion of general public or *intelligentsia*, but it is having some effect on a few army and police [? officers] in Kabul. Russian attitude continues un[? defined], and apprehension still exists of Russian aggression of military or political nature. While I consider continued success of British arms will have cumulative effect on public opinion in our favour, it is possible that Germans, if foiled in the west, may turn their attention to this country in desperate attempt to cause diversion. [? If they] do, there is sufficiently large subversive element in the country, antagonistic to present régime, to cause considerable disturbance, though I do not think it likely that [? they would] succeed in overthrowing the Government or in causing it to adopt hostile attitude to ourselves.

(Repeated to Government of India.)

[N 6620/2680/97]

No. 54.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received September 18.)

(No. 56. Confidential.)

My Lord,

Kabul, July 2, 1940.

I HAVE the honour to transmit herewith a report on the heads of foreign missions in Kabul.

2. I am sending a copy of this despatch to the Secretary of State for India and to the Government of India.

I have, &c.

W. K. FRASER-TYTLER.

Enclosure in No. 54.

Report on Heads of Foreign Missions in Kabul.

Egypt: Chargé d'Affaires, M. G. Hassan Arousy.

Appointed on the 6th March, 1940. M. Arousy is acting as chargé d'affaires pending the arrival of the new minister, who is believed to be M. Suleiman-day-ul-Nut.

France: Chargé d'Affaires, M. Gabriel Bonneau.

M. Bonneau has been chargé d'affaires since the departure of M. Barbier on leave in November 1939. It is understood that M. Barbier is not returning to his post, but it is not known whether a new minister has been appointed.

Germany: Minister, Herr Hans Pilger.

Presented his credentials on the 28th August, 1937.

Iran: Ambassador, M. Ali Soheilli.

Presented his credentials on the 25th December, 1939. M. Soheilli is a pleasant, friendly colleague, who was well known to members of His Majesty's Legation in Tehran when he was Minister for Foreign Affairs. He also served in the Iranian Legation in London. He has been much affected by the recent developments of the international situation, but has hitherto remained on good terms with His Majesty's Legation. He talks fluent French and some English, and is married to a Russian, who is enthusiastic on the subject of London, where she spent two years. She speaks a little very halting English.

Italy: Minister, Commendatore Pietro Quaroni.

Presented his credentials on the 9th December, 1936. Up to the outbreak of war with Italy Signor Quaroni maintained very friendly relations with this legation. He is said to be depressed at the course events have now taken and at the future prospects for Italy.

Japan: Minister, M. Varo Moriya.

Presented his credentials on the 25th June, 1938. M. Moriya has remained on good terms with His Majesty's Legation during the year under report. Apart from his efforts to stimulate Japanese trade in this country, at which he has been fairly successful, his main preoccupation has been to watch the movements of Russia on the Afghan northern border and particularly in the direction of Sinkiang. He is at present much perturbed at the international situation in so far as it may affect the situation in Central Asia. He speaks French and English, and his wife a little English.

Turkey: Ambassador, Mamduh Sevkett Esendal.

Presented his credentials on the 7th February, 1934. M. Esendal returned from leave in December 1939, and has since then proved himself a staunch friend and shrewd adviser in all matters connected with British relations with this country. He carries considerable influence with the senior Ministers of the Afghan Government.

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: Ambassador, M. K. Mikhailov.

Presented his credentials on the 23rd March, 1938. Speaks fair English. Before his appointment to Kabul it is understood that M. Mikhailov held a post

of professor in history at Moscow University. He is a scholarly type of man and young for an ambassador, being only about 35 years of age. He has never before been out of Russia, and it is perhaps unfortunate that his first experience abroad should be of so backward a country as Afghanistan. He does not go down very well with the Afghan Government, who are annoyed by his lack of *savoir faire* and brusque manner in diplomatic dealings. (Written in 1939.) M. Mikhailov proceeded on leave in August 1939 and returned to Kabul in January 1940.

[N 6634/62/97]

No. 56.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Mr. Caroe.—(Communicated by Sir K. Fraser-Tytler, C.B.E., D.S.O., D.F.C., D.L.C., D.P.C., D.S.M., D.S.M.C., D.S.M.D., D.S.M.E., D.S.M.F., D.S.M.G., D.S.M.H., D.S.M.I., D.S.M.J., D.S.M.K., D.S.M.L., D.S.M.M., D.S.M.N., D.S.M.O., D.S.M.P., D.S.M.Q., D.S.M.R., D.S.M.S., D.S.M.T., D.S.M.U., D.S.M.V., D.S.M.W., D.S.M.X., D.S.M.Y., D.S.M.Z.)

Question of Co-operation between the Government of India and the Afghan Government in Frontier Matters.

Dear Caroe,

June 19, 1940.

I FEEL that this is hardly the time to continue consideration of increased measures of co-operation between the Governments of India and Afghanistan in frontier matters. But as some day the question will doubtless arise again, I cannot leave entirely without comment some portions of your letter to the Under-Secretary of State for India, London, dated the 13th February, 1940. My comments will, however, be confined to questions of fact. I fully realise that the Minister in Kabul is not in a position to argue the merits of the frontier problem, which is and must remain a matter between British and Afghan experts. All he can do is to state as clearly as possible the points of view of each Government on this matter.

2. On questions of fact, however, I would draw your attention to paragraph 3 of your letter, in which you state that I contended that Afghan officials "have a far more extensive and intimate connexion with the tribal problem than even the most experienced of our frontier officers." If you will turn to paragraph 11 of my despatch you will find that I said "Afghan Ministers" and not "Afghan officials"—a very different matter. I was, of course, referring to such men as the Prime Minister, the War Minister, Shah Wali, and one or two others of the older men, and the opinion I was expressing was not mine but theirs. In the same way it is their opinion that they "understand" the tribes better than we do.

3. In view of this explanation the remainder of this paragraph appears hardly relevant, but it is perhaps worth noting that the idea of training young Afghans in tribal management was not to improve their handling of the tribes, but to enable them to deal with British officers as commissioners and so forth. Whether the Afghan method of handling the tribes as set forth in the last sentence of this paragraph is less suited to the tribal mentality or not is a matter of opinion, and I should not venture to give one. But it is, perhaps, worth remembering that this method has only been in force now for about ten years, and it is early yet to judge of its efficacy or otherwise.

4. The only other point of fact which calls for comment is the statement in paragraph 4 about the "kind of co-operation in frontier matters His Majesty's Minister and the Afghan Government have in mind." This statement is not correct. I had nothing in mind when I wrote my despatch of the 14th January save to set forth the Afghan Government point of view as clearly as possible, and in paragraph 11 of that despatch I dissociated myself entirely from the opinions of the Afghan Government which I was presenting.

5. I am sending a copy of this letter to Peel and Baggallay.

Yours sincerely,

W. K. FRASER-TYTLER.

[N 6098/34/97]

No. 57.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir K. Fraser-Tytler to Viscount Halifax.—(Received November 1.)

(No. 70.)

My Lord,

Kabul, September 3, 1940.

IN my telegram of the 20th August (Katodon No. 220), I promised to send a full report of my discussions with the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs on the question of Indian constitutional reforms. My instructions as to the line to be taken in any such discussions were contained in your Lordship's telegram of the 7th August (Forminka No. 186), but when I read the statement made by his Excellency the Viceroy on the subject it did not seem to me that there was very much room for discussion at the present time. The immediate outcome of the Viceroy's pronouncement was to be an enlargement of his Excellency's Executive Council and the appointment of a war advisory council, neither of which changes were in the least likely to affect Afghanistan, while the decision to set up with the least possible delay at the end of the war a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life to devise the framework of a new Constitution did not appear to contain proposals of a nature sufficiently concrete to disturb the Afghan Government just now. I should, in fact, have been inclined to leave the matter for the Afghan Government to raise if they wished, were it not for the certainty that the Afghans, having made representations in the matter, would be chagrined if no notice whatever were taken of their attitude. I therefore took the opportunity afforded by a recent interview with the Prime Minister to open the subject on the lines already indicated in my telegram, and to enquire whether he had any observations to make.

2. In reply, His Royal Highness did not enter into a discussion of the details previously represented by the Foreign Minister (my despatch No. 54 of the 28th June) on the grounds that these points, though of vital importance to the Afghan Government, had already been placed before His Majesty's Government. He preferred to confine his observations to the more general aspect of the proposed changes in the Constitution.

3. In the first place, he said, there was no doubt that the shadow of impending changes, which had lain heavily over India for the last twenty years or so, could not but have a disturbing effect on the minds of the people of a neighbouring country, whose economic life was so bound up with India and whose political future or even existence as a nation might depend on the maintenance of the British connexion with India and Central Asia. However well he himself might understand the proposals for the future Constitution, and he was doubtful whether he did, in fact, understand them, it was extremely difficult to explain to the people of Afghanistan that the changes now adumbrated did not involve the withdrawal of British power from India. While such uncertainty existed, men's minds were liable easily to be upset, the course of future events became more difficult to ascertain and the policy of his Government more difficult to direct.

4. In the second place, while he fully recognised that the Afghan Government had no right to be consulted before constitutional changes in India were decided on, he very much hoped that the implications of these proposals, not only on the internal structure of India but also on her external relations, would be fully appreciated before such changes took place. The peoples of India had lived long now under the shadow of British protection, which had kept them safe from invasion for upwards of a hundred years, and he sometimes feared that, amid the welter of internal politics, the dominant factor in the well-being of all nations, the power to resist external aggression, was in India relegated to a secondary place. He could not, of course, tell what arrangements for the future defence of India the British Government had in mind, but he earnestly hoped that nothing would be done so to weaken her armed forces as to impair her ability to maintain the balance of power in Asia.

5. He went on to speak of the position of Afghanistan, and, while once more disclaiming any right to interfere, expressed the earnest hope that the vital interests of his country would be taken into consideration when the time came. He could not believe that in framing a new Constitution the British Government could or would disregard these interests or refuse to listen to any representations which the Afghan Government felt called upon to make.

6. Lastly, he asked, with diffidence, that the Afghan Government should be told the truth. While attaching the greatest respect to any pronouncements made

either by His Majesty's Government or by his Excellency the Viceroy, he was inclined to wonder whether these recent statements represented a realistic attitude towards the problem. He was realist himself, and as such he ventured to suggest that the problem of the future of India was not and never could be susceptible of solution on a basis of Hindu-Moslem unity. He believed it would be in the long run better for all concerned to recognise this fact, and, starting from this basis, to go as far as possible to meet the wishes of each community, while all the time recognising that the main point was to maintain the peace and balance of power of Asia rather than to satisfy the demands of this or the other political party in India.

7. I have given above a résumé of the main points of the Prime Minister's remarks. They were made in the course of a discussion, in which I was able to put before him in general terms the gist of the Government of India's telegram of the 7th August, No. 464. He listened to the statements contained therein with interest, but without conviction, and his comments suggested the attitude of a man who, having heard a friend's arguments, would wish to brush these aside and to hear from him, as a friend, what he really thought. On this point I was not able to enlighten him, save in the terms of my instructions. But when he came to his last argument, reported in paragraph 6 above, I told him that it was thirty years since he had last been in India for any length of time, and that he was not in a position now to judge the state of feeling in India. Much had happened in these thirty years, and the progress of India towards political unity had advanced far beyond anything of which he could have knowledge.

8. In view of the report now received of the refusal of the Congress to accept His Majesty's Government's proposals, this last sentence was perhaps an overstatement. In any case, the political future of India appears at the moment too uncertain to make it possible for me to comment at length on the Prime Minister's attitude. If, however, I may be permitted a personal observation based on many years' study of the Indian problem as viewed from across her borders, I would suggest that in seeking a solution to this problem two matters of fundamental importance should not be lost sight of. The first is the geographical position of India in its relation to Central Asia. No amount of political negotiation will alter the circumstances inherent in human nature and proved by history that the men of the hungry highlands will descend, if permitted to do so, to despoil and, if possible, to possess the rich plains of their neighbours. For many years now British power has kept this tendency in check. It can continue to do so indefinitely, but only if the control of the armies in India remains in British hands. I do not wish to suggest that Indian control of the military forces of India is not possible. I have no sufficient knowledge of the present conditions in India on which to base such a suggestion. But I have held the view now for many years that the turning-point of India's relations with Afghanistan and beyond will come, not necessarily with the grant of Dominion status in some form or other, but with the transfer of military control into Indian hands. Such a transfer, if it ever comes to pass, will be to the leaders of this country the concrete sign that Britain has renounced her control of India, and with this the right to compel any new Indian Government to assume obligations in Central Asia or the Middle East unless they were willing to do so.

9. The second fundamental matter is the racial and religious connexion between the peoples of North-Western India and of Mahometan Asia. Our efforts in Palestine to implement our undertakings to the Jews have cost us much Mahometan goodwill, but the feelings roused over Palestine will be as nothing compared with those likely to be aroused at any rate in the Middle East by any attempt at political fusion between the two great Indian parties if such fusion does not carry the whole-hearted support of a large majority of Indian Mahometans. It is not for me to say whether such support is likely ever to be forthcoming for any national Constitution at present contemplated, but the goodwill of the Mahometan world appears at present to be too valuable an asset to the British Empire generally to be jeopardised by any failure to secure this support.

10. I am sending a copy of this despatch to the Secretary of State for India and to the Government of India.

I have, &c.

W. K. FRASER-TYTLER.

[N 7516/7516/97]

No. 58.

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Viscount Halifax.—(Received December 24.)

(No. 548.)

My Lord,

Angora, November 24, 1940.

I HAVE the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith a copy of the Treaty of Friendship between Afghanistan and Sweden signed at Angora on the 22nd October by the Afghan Ambassador and the Swedish Chargé d'Affaires in Turkey on behalf of their respective countries.

2. A member of the Swedish Legation has explained that this treaty was principally occasioned by the engagement of Swedish engineers by the Afghan Government.

3. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ministers at Kabul and Stockholm.

I have, &c.

HUGHE KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN.

Enclosure

Traité d'Amitié.

L'AFGHANISTAN d'une part, et la Suède d'autre part, également et sincèrement désireux d'établir et de consolider les liens de sincère amitié entre le Royaume d'Afghanistan et le Royaume de Suède, et pénétrés de la même conviction que les relations entre les deux États, une fois établies, serviront à la prospérité et au bien-être de leurs nations respectives.

Ont résolu de conclure un Traité d'Amitié et ont à cet effet nommé pour leurs plénipotentiaires, savoir :

Sa Majesté le Roi d'Afghanistan :

Son Ambassadeur Extraordinaire et Plénipotentiaire à Ankara, Son Excellence M. Feyz Mohammed Han, et

Sa Majesté le Roi de Suède :

Son Chargé d'Affaires *a.i.* à Ankara, M. Knut Richard Thyberg

Lesquels, après s'être communiqué leurs pleins pouvoirs, trouvés en bonne et due forme, ont convenu des dispositions suivantes :

ARTICLE 1^{er}.

Il y aura inviolable et amitié sincère et perpétuelle entre le Royaume d'Afghanistan et le Royaume de Suède, ainsi qu'entre les ressortissants des deux parties.

ARTICLE 2.

Les Hautes Parties Contractantes sont d'accord pour établir les relations diplomatiques entre les deux États conformément aux principes du droit des gens; elles conviennent que les représentants diplomatiques qu'il plairait à chacune d'elles d'envoyer et d'entretenir auprès de l'autre recevront, à charge de réciprocité, dans le territoire de l'autre le traitement consacré par les principes généraux du droit international public général.

ARTICLE 3

Les Hautes Parties Contractantes sont d'accord pour régler les relations consulaires et commerciales entre leurs pays respectifs ainsi que les conditions d'établissement et de séjour, dans le territoire de chacune d'elles, des ressortissants de l'autre partie, par les conventions qu'elles se réservent de conclure conformément aux règles du droit international public général sur la base d'une parfaite réciprocité.

ARTICLE 4.

Le présent traité sera ratifié et les ratifications seront échangées à Ankara le plus tôt que faire se pourra. Il entrera en vigueur le quinzième jour après l'échange des ratifications.

En foi de quoi, les plénipotentiaires respectifs ont signé le présent traité et y ont apposé leurs sceaux.

Fait en double exemplaire à Ankara le 22 octobre 1940.

(Undert.) FEYZ MOHAMMED HAN.

(Undert.) K. R. THYBERG.

END